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MORAL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
OF THE WORKING CLASSES.

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THE  
SPEECH



OF

LORD ASHLEY, M.P.,

*Anthony Ashley Cooper*

IN

*Shaftesbury*

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1843.

On Moving, "That an Humble Address be presented to her Majesty, praying that her Majesty will be graciously pleased to take into her instant and serious consideration, the best means of diffusing the benefits and blessings of a moral and religious education amongst the working classes of her people."

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LONDON:

JOHN OLLIVIER, 59, PALL MALL.

1843.

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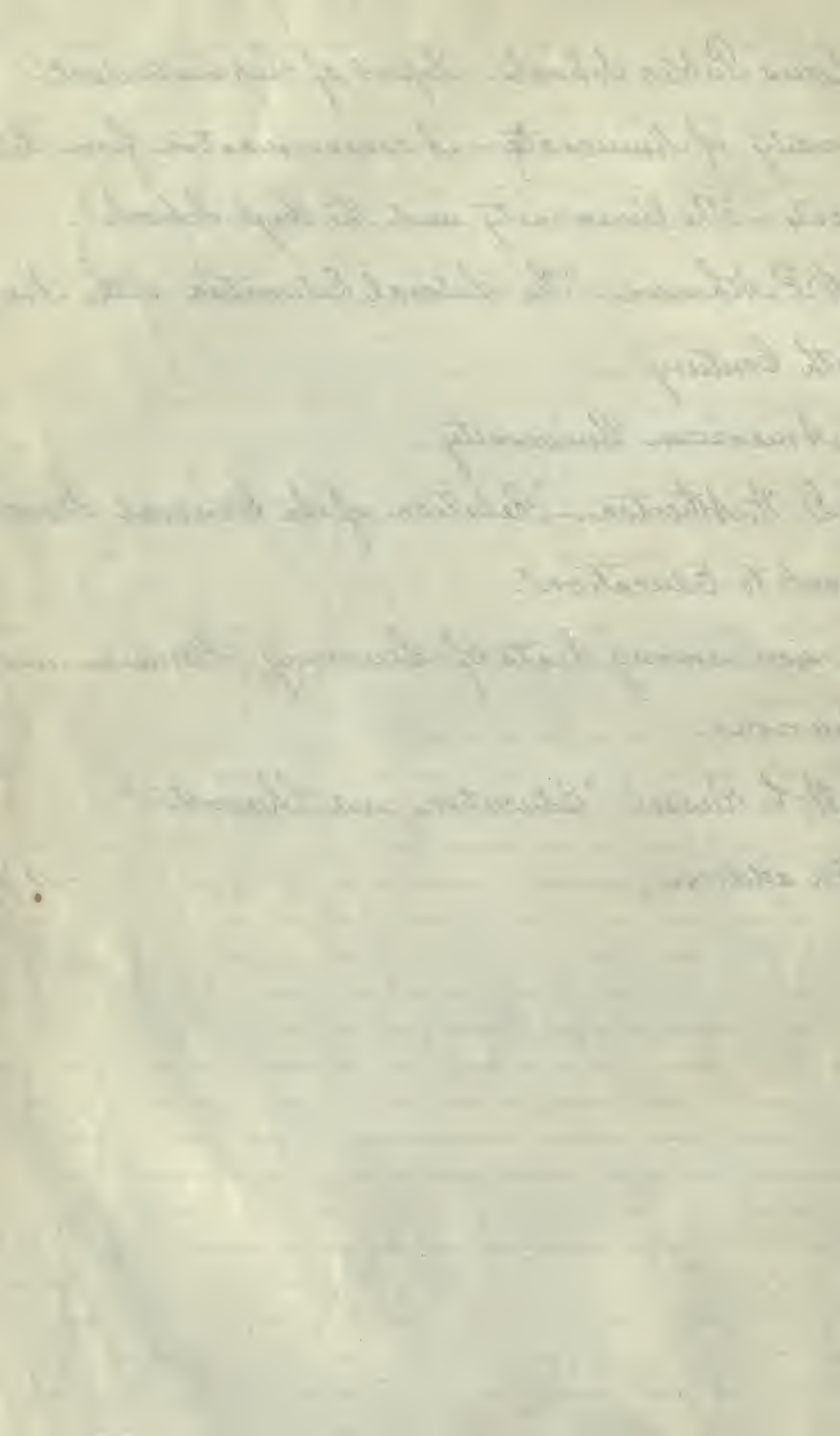
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## SPEECH.

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SIR,—The question, that I have undertaken to submit to the deliberation of this House, is one so prodigiously vast, and so unspeakably important, that there may well be demanded an apology, if not an explanation, from any individual member who presumes to handle so weighty and so difficult a matter. And, Sir, had any real difference of opinion existed, I should probably have refrained from the task; but late events have, I fear, proved that the moral condition of our people is unhealthy and even perilous—all are pretty nearly agreed that something further must be attempted for their welfare; and I now venture, therefore, to offer, for the discussion, both matter and opportunity.

Surely, Sir, it will not be necessary as a preliminary to this motion to enquire on whom should rest the responsibility of our present condition—our duty is to examine the moral state of the country; to say whether it be safe, honourable, happy, and becoming the dignity of a Christian kingdom; and, if it be not so, to address ourselves to the cure of evils which, unlike most inveterate and deeply-rooted abuses, though they cannot be suffered to exist without danger, may be removed without the slightest grievance, real or imaginary, to any community or even any individual.

The present time, too, is so far favourable to the propounding of this question, as that it finds us in a state of mind equally distant, I believe, from the two extremes of opinion; the one, that education is the direct, immediate, and lasting

panacea for all our disorders; the other, that it will either do nothing at all, or even exasperate the mischief. That it will do every thing is absurd; that it will do nothing is more so; every statesman, that is, every true statesman, of every age and nation has considered a moral, steady, obedient, and united people, indispensable to external greatness or internal peace. Wise men have marked out the road whereby these desirable ends may be attained; I will not multiply authorities; I will quote two only, the one secular, the other sacred.—“I think I may say,” observes the famous John Locke, “that, of all the men we meet with, nine parts in ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education. It is that which makes the great difference in mankind.” “Train up a child,” said Solomon, “in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Now, has any man ever shewn by what other means we may arrive at this most necessary consummation? If it be required in small states and even in despotic monarchies; much more is it required in populous kingdoms and free governments;—and such is our position—our lot is cast in a time when our numbers, already vast, are hourly increasing at an almost geometric ratio—our institutions receive, every day, a more liberal complexion, while the democratic principle, by the mere force of circumstances, is fostered and developed—the public safety demands, each year, a larger measure of enlightenment and self-control; of enlightenment that all may understand their real interests; of self-control that individual passion may be repressed to the advancement of public welfare. I know not where to search for these things but in the lessons and practice of the Gospel: true Christianity is essentially favourable to freedom of institutions in Church and State, because it imparts a judgment of your own and another’s rights, a sense of public and private duty, an enlarged philanthropy and self-



restraint, unknown to those democracies of former times, which are called, and only called, the polished nations of antiquity.

Sir, I do not deny, very far from it, the vast and meritorious efforts of the National Society; nor will I speak disparagingly of the efforts of some of the dissenting bodies; but in spite of all that has been done, a tremendous waste still remains uncultivated, "a great and terrible wilderness," that I shall now endeavour to lay open before you.

Sir, the population of England and Wales in the year 1801 was 8,872,980; in 1841 it had risen to 15,906,829, shewing an increase in less than half a century on the whole population of 7,033,849. If I here take one-fifth (which is understated, one-fourth being the ordinary calculation,) as the number supposed to be capable of some education, there will result a number of 3,181,365; deducting one third as provided for at private expense, there will be left a number of 2,120,910; deducting also for children in union workhouses, 50,000; and lastly deducting 10 per cent. for accidents and casualties, 212,091; there will then be the number of 1,858,819 to be provided for at the public expense. Now by the tables in the excellent pamphlet of the Rev. Mr. Burgess, of Chelsea, it appears that the total number of daily scholars, in connection with the Established church, is 749,626. By the same tables, the total number of daily scholars, in connection with dissenting bodies, is stated at 95,000; making a sum total of daily scholars in England and Wales, 844,626; leaving, without any daily instruction the number of 1,014,193 persons. These tables are calculated upon the returns of 1833, with an estimate for the increase of the Church of England scholars since those returns, and with an allowance in the same proportion for the increase of the dissenting scholars. But if we look forward to the next ten years, there will be an

increase of at least 2,500,000 in the population; and should nothing be done to supply our want, we shall then have in addition to our present arrears, a fearful multitude of untutored savages.

Next, I find as a sample of the state of adult and juvenile delinquency, that the number of committals in the year 1841 was, of persons of all ages, 27,760; and of persons under the age of sixteen years, the proportion was  $11\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. I quote these tables in conformity with established usage and ancient prejudice; but they are, with a view to any accurate estimate of the moral condition of the kingdom, altogether fallacious—they do not explain to us whether the cases be those of distinct criminals, or in many instances, those of the same individuals reproduced; if the proportion be increased we have no clue to the discovery whether it be real or fictitious, permanent or casual; if diminished, we congratulate each other, but without examining how far the diminution must be ascribed to an increased morality, or a more effective Police—it is very well to rely on an effective Police for short and turbulent periods; it is ruinous to rely on it for the government of a generation.—For after all, how much there must ever be perilous to the state, and perilous to society, which, whether it be manifested or not, is far beyond the scope of magisterial power, and curable only by a widely different process! I will not, therefore, attempt a comparison of one period of crime with another; if the matters be worse, my case is established; if better, they can be so only through the greater diffusion of external morality. That morality, then, which is so effective even on the surface of the nation, it should be our earnest and constant endeavour to root deeply in their hearts.

Having stated this much in a general way, I will now take a few of those details which form a part of the com-

plement of this mass of wickedness and mischief—we shall thus learn the principal seats of the danger, its character and extent locally, and in a great degree, the mode and nature of the remedy.

Sir, there have been laid upon the table within the last few days, a report by Mr. Horner and Mr. Saunders, inspectors of factories; and also the second report of the Childrens' Employment Commission; from these documents I shall draw very largely; and I wish to take this opportunity, as their final report has now been presented, of expressing to the commissioners, my sincere and heartfelt thanks for an exercise of talent and vigour, never before surpassed by any public servants.

The first town that I shall refer to is Manchester—some of those details I shall now quote I stated in the last session; but I shall venture to state them again as they bear immediately on the question before us. By the police returns of Manchester made up to December, 1841, we find the number of persons taken into custody during that year, was 13,345. Discharged by magistrates without punishment, 10,208; of these, under 20 years of age, there were males, 3,069; and females, 745. By the same returns to July 1842, (six months), there were taken into custody, 8,341; (This would make in a whole year, were the same proportion observed, 16,682;) of these, males 5,810; females 2,531. Now as to their instruction; with a knowledge of reading only, or reading and writing imperfectly, males, 1,999; females, 863. Neither read nor write, males, 3,098; females, 1,519;—total of these last 4,617. At 15 and under 20, 2,360; of these, males 1,639; females 721. But take what may be called the “curable” portion, and there will be, at 10 years and under 15, 665; males 547, females 118. Discharged by the magistrates in 182, without punishment (six months), 6,307, or at the



rate of 12,614 in a year. Can the House be surprised at this statement, when the means for supplying opportunities to crime and the practice of debauchery are so abundant? It appears that there are in Manchester—Pawnbrokers, 129; this may be a symptom of distress; beer houses 769; public houses 498; brothels 309; ditto, lately suppressed, 111; ditto, where prostitutes are kept, 163; ditto, where they resort, 223; street-walkers in borough, 763; thieves residing in the borough who do nothing but steal, 212; persons following some lawful occupation, but augmenting their gains by habitual violation of the law, 160; houses for receiving stolen goods, 63; ditto, suppressed lately, 32; houses for resort of thieves, 103; ditto, lately suppressed, 25; lodging-houses where sexes indiscriminately sleep together, 109.

But there is another cause that aids the progress of crime which prevails in the town of Manchester. I will mention the fact that a vast number of children of the tenderest years, either through absence or through neglect of their parents, I do not now say which, are suffered to roam at large through the streets of the town, contracting the most idle and profligate habits. I have here a return that I myself moved for in the year 1836, and I see that the number of children found wandering in the streets, and restored to their parents by the police in 1835, was no less than 8,650, in 1840 it was reduced to 5,500—having heard this table the House will not be surprised at the observations I am about to read from a gentleman of long and practical knowledge of the place. “What chance,” says he, “have these children of becoming good members of society? These unfortunates gradually acquire vagrant habits, become beggars, vagrants, criminals. It does not appear unfair to calculate that in the borough of Manchester 1,500 children are added to

‘les classes dangereuses’ annually. Besides,” he adds, “the moral evil produced by these 1,500, let a calculation be made how much money per annum this criminal class costs the state.”

I will next take the town of Birmingham; and it will be seen by the police returns for 1841, that the number of persons who were taken into custody was 5,556, of these the males were 4,537, and the females 1,018. Of these there could neither read nor write, 2,711; who could read only and write imperfectly, 2,504; read and write well, 206; having superior instruction, 36. I feel that it is necessary to apologise to the House for troubling them with such minute details; nevertheless, details such as these are absolutely indispensable. Now from a report on the state of education in the town of Birmingham, made by the Birmingham Statistical Society—one of those useful bodies which have sprung up of late years, and which give to the public a great mass of information, that may be turned to the best purposes—I find that the total number of schools of all kinds in the town of Birmingham is 669; but then the society calls everything a school where a child receives any sort of instruction, perhaps in a place more fitted to be a sty or coal-hole. Now out of the whole mass of the entire population of Birmingham there were 27,659 scholars. A vast proportion of these schools are what are called “dame schools;” and what these are in truth, may be known by the surveyors’ report, who says of them, “moral and religious instruction forms no part of the system in dame-schools. A mistress in one of this class of schools on being asked whether she gave moral instruction to her scholars, replied ‘No, I can’t afford it at 3*d* a week.’ Several did not know the meaning of the question. Very few appeared to think it was a part of their duty.”—This, then, being the number of the schools for

educating the young, and the character of the education imparted to them, I may now be allowed to state what are the means for the practice of vice. From the police returns for 1840, it appears that the number of these places is 998, and they are thus distributed :—Houses for reception of stolen goods, 81 ; ditto for resort of thieves, 228 ; brothels where prostitutes are kept, 200 ; houses of ill-fame, where they resort 110 ; number of houses where they lodge, 187 ; number of mendicants' lodging houses, 122 ; houses where sexes sleep indiscriminately together, 47—998 ; add to this, public-houses, 577 ; beer shops, 573. I will close this part by reading to the House an extract from a report, made by a committee of medical gentlemen in Birmingham, who, in the most benevolent spirit, devoted themselves to an examination of the state of Birmingham ; and who, looking to the removal of the growing evils that threaten the population, assert, that ‘ the first and most prominent suggestion is, the better education of the females in the arts of domestic economy. To the extreme ignorance of domestic management, on the part of the wives of the mechanics, is much of the misery and want of comfort to be traced. Numerous instances have occurred to us of the confirmed drunkard who attributes his habits of dissipation to a wretched home.’

I will next take the town of Leeds ; and there it will be seen that the police details would be very similar in character, though differing in number, to those of Manchester and Birmingham—the report of the state of Leeds for 1838, is to this effect :—“ It appears that the early periods of life furnish the greatest portion of criminals. Children of seven, eight, and nine years of age are not unfrequently brought before magistrates ; a very large portion under 14 years. The parents are, it is to be feared in many instances, the direct causes of their crime.”

“The spirit of lawless insubordination (says Mr. Symons the sub-commissioner) which prevails at Leeds among the children is very manifest: it is matter for painful apprehension.” James Child, an inspector of police, states that which is well worthy of the attention of the House: He says there is “a great deal of drunkenness, especially among the young people. I have seen children very little higher than the table at these shops. There are some beer-shops where there are rooms up stairs, and the boys and girls, old people, and married of both sexes, go up two by two, as they can agree, to have connection. . . . I am sure that sexual connection begins between boys and girls at 14 and 15 years old.” John Stubbs, of the police force, confirms the above testimony. “We have,” he says, “a deal of girls on the town under 15, and boys who live by thieving. There are half a dozen beer shops where none but young ones go at all. They support these houses.”

I will now turn to Sheffield:—The Rev. Mr. Livesey, the minister of St. Philip’s, having a population of 24,000, consisting almost exclusively of the labouring classes, gives in evidence,—“Moral condition of children . . . in numerous instances most deplorable. . . . On Sunday afternoons it is impossible to pass along the highways, &c. beyond the police boundaries, without encountering numerous groups of boys, from 12 years and upwards, gaming for copper coin . . . the boys are early initiated into habits of drinking. But the most revolting feature of juvenile depravity is early contamination from the association of the sexes. The outskirts of the town are absolutely polluted by this abomination; nor is the veil of darkness nor seclusion always sought by these degraded beings. Too often they are to be met in small parties, who appear to associate for the purpose of promiscuous intercourse,



their ages being apparently about fourteen or fifteen." The Rev. Mr. Farish states, "There are beer houses attended by youths exclusively, for the men will not have them in the same houses with themselves." Hugh Parker, Esq. a justice of the peace, remarks, "A great proportion of the working classes are ignorant and profligate . . . the morals of their children exceedingly depraved and corrupt . . . given, at a very early age, to petty theft, swearing and lying; during minority to drunkenness, debauchery, idleness, profanation of the Sabbath; dog and prize-fighting." Mr. Rayner, the superintendent of police, deposes, that "Lads from twelve to fourteen years of age constantly frequent beer-houses, and have, even at that age, their girls with them, who often incite them to commit petty thefts . . . vices of every description at a very early age . . . great number of vagrant children prowling about the streets . . . these corrupt the working children. . . . The habits of the adults confirm the children in their vices." George Messon, a police officer, adds, "There are many beer-shops which are frequented by boys only . . . as early as thirteen years of age. The girls are many of them loose in their conduct, and accompany the boys. . . . I remember the Chartist attack on Sheffield last winter. I am certain that a great number of young lads were among them—some as young as fifteen: they generally act as men." All this was confirmed by Daniel Astwood, also a police officer; by Mr. George Crossland, registrar and vestry clerk to the board of guardians; by Mr. Ashley, master of the Lancasterian school; by Dr. Knight, and by Mr. Carr, a surgeon. Mr. Abraham, the inventor of the magnetic guard, remarks, "There is most vice and levity and mischief in the class who are between sixteen and nineteen. You see more lads between seventeen and nineteen with dogs at their



heels and other evidences of dissolute habits." Mr. James Hall and others of the working people say, the "morals of the children are tenfold worse than formerly . . . . There are beer shops frequented by boys from nine to fifteen years old, to play for money and liquor." Charlotte Kirkman, a poor woman of the operative class, aged 60, observes; and I much wish here to draw the attention of the House, because it is extremely desirable that they should know in what light, the best and most decent of the working people regard these things, "I think morals are getting much worse, which I attribute in a great measure to the beer-shops. . . . There were no such girls in my time as there are now. When I was four or five and twenty, my mother would have knocked me down if I had spoken improperly to her. . . . Many have children at 15. I think bastardy almost as common now as a woman being in the family-way by her husband. . . . Now it's nothing thought about." "The evidence (says the sub-commissioner), with very few exceptions, attests a melancholy amount of immorality among the children of the working classes in Sheffield, and especially among young persons. Within a year of the time of my visit," he continues, "the town was preserved from an organised scheme to fire and plunder it, merely by the information of one man, and the consequent readiness of the troops. A large body of men and boys marched on it in the dead of the night; and a very large quantity of crowsfeet to lame horses, pikes, and combustibles were found on them, at their houses, and left on the road. Several were pledged to fire their own houses. I name this, as a further illustration of the perilous ignorance and vice prevailing among that young class between boys and full grown men, who were known to be among the chief actors in these scenes."

Mr. Symons—and I shall the more effectively quote his

opinions, because he is most strongly opposed to the political views which I venture to hold—further says, and it is right that I should state it in justice to so excellent a body of men: “If vice increases in Sheffield, the blame assuredly rests not on the clergy; few towns are blessed with so pious or active a ministry. It is not for want of exertion on their parts, if the churches and chapels are unfilled, and the schools scantily attended; and this remark applies also to part of the Wesleyan and some other religious denominations.”

I shall now proceed to another district, to Wolverhampton, and there I find Mr. Horne giving the following description:—“Among all the children and young persons I examined, I found, with very few exceptions, that their minds were as stunted as their bodies; their moral feelings stagnant. . . . The children and young persons possess but little sense of moral duty towards their parents, and have little affection for them. . . . One child believed that Pontius Pilate and Goliath were apostles; another, fourteen or fifteen years of age, did not know how many two and two made. In my evidence taken in this town alone, as many as five children and young persons had never heard even the name of Jesus Christ. . . . You will find boys who have never heard of such a place as London, and of Willenhall, (only three miles distant,) who have never heard of the name of the Queen, or of such names as Wellington, Nelson, Bonaparte, or King George.” “But,” (adds the commissioner) “while of scripture names I could not, in general, obtain any rational account, many of the most sacred names never having even been heard, there was a general knowledge of the lives of Dick Turpin and Jack Sheppard, not to mention the preposterous epidemic of a hybrid negro song.”—This we may suppose is an elegant periphrasis for the popular song of “Jim Crow.”—Mr.

Horne goes on to say—"The master of the British School deposes, 'I have resided, as a teacher, for the last six years, during which I have observed that the character and habits of the numerous labouring poor are of the lowest order.' The master of the National School says 'besotted to the last degree.'"—Sir, there are many things of an extremely horrid description to be detailed concerning the physical condition of the children in these parts, but I forbear to touch them at present, being engaged only on their moral deficiency.

I now go to Willenhall, and there it is said,—“A lower condition of morals cannot, I think, be found—they sink some degrees (when that is possible) below the worst classes of children and young persons in Wolverhampton; they do not display the remotest sign of comprehension as to what is meant by the term of morals.” Next, of Wednesfield, it is said the population are “much addicted to drinking; many besotted in the extreme; poor dejected men, with hardly a rag to their backs, are often seen drunk two or three days in the week, and even when they have large families.” The same profligacy and ignorance at Darlaston, where we have the evidence of three parties, an overseer, a collector, and a relieving officer, to a very curious fact; I quote this to shew the utter recklessness and intellectual apathy in which these people live, caring little but for existence and the immediate physical wants of the passing hour; they state, “that there are as many as 1,000 men in Darlaston who do not know their own names, only their nicknames.” But it is said, that in Bilston things are much better. It is remarked that the “moral condition of children and young persons on the whole was very superior to that in Wolverhampton;” he excepts, however, “the bank-girls, and those who work at the screw-manufactories.” Among them, “great numbers of bastards;” the bank-girls drive

coal-carts, ride astride upon horses, drink, swear, fight, smoke, whistle, sing, and care for nobody." Here I must observe, if things are better in Bilston, it is owing to the dawn of education, "to the great exertions of the Rev. Mr. Fletcher, and the Rev. Mr. Owen, in the church; and Mr. Robert Bew, (chemist,) and Mr. Dimmock, (iron merchant,) among the dissenters." Next, as to Sedgeley, "children and young persons," says the rector, "grow up in irreligion, immorality, and ignorance. The number of girls at nailing considerably exceeds that of the boys; it may be termed the district of female blacksmiths; constantly associating with depraved adults, and young persons of the opposite sex, they naturally fall into all their ways; and drink, smoke, swear, &c. &c. and become as bad as men. The men and boys are usually naked, except a pair of trowsers; the women and girls have only a thin ragged petticoat, and an open shirt without sleeves."—Look to Warrington; the Honourable and Reverend Horace Powys, the rector, says, and there is no man more capable, from talent and character, of giving an opinion,—“My conviction is—and it is founded on the observation of some years—that the general condition of the children employed in labour in this town is alarmingly degraded, both religiously, morally, and intellectually.” And here, too, is the evidence of the Rev. John Molyneux, a Roman Catholic priest, who began by stating his peculiar qualifications to give testimony, having a congregation of three thousand persons, and chiefly among the poorer classes. “Children in pin-works,” he said, “are very immoral—they sit close together, and encourage each other in cursing and swearing, and loose conversation, which I grant you they do not understand,”—a conclusion in which I can not agree:—“but it renders them he adds prone to adopt the acts of immorality on which they converse.”—“Those girls



who from very early labour at pins go to the factories, do not ever make good housekeepers : they have no idea of it ; neither of economy, nor cooking, nor mending their clothes."

Next, Sir, I will examine the Potteries. Mr. Scriven, the sub-commissioner, uses these expressions :—" I almost tremble, however, when I contemplate the fearful deficiency of knowledge existing throughout the district, and the consequences likely to result to this increased and increasing population. . . . It will appear," he adds, " by the evidence from Cobridge and Burslem, that more than three-fourths of the persons therein named can neither read nor write. . . . It is not from my own knowledge," he continues, " that I proclaim their utter, their absolute ignorance. I would respectfully refer you to the evidence of their own pastors and masters, and it will appear that, as one man, they acknowledge and lament their low and degraded condition." Mr. Lowndes, clerk to the board of guardians of the Burslem union, says : " It is with pain that I have witnessed the demoralizing effects of the system, as it has hitherto existed. . . . It appears to me fraught with incalculable evils, both physical and moral." Mr. Grainger, a sub-commissioner, in his report respecting Nottingham, writes : " All parties, clergy, police, manufacturers, workpeople, and parents, agree that the present system is a most fertile source of immorality. . . . The natural results . . . have contributed in no slight degree, to the immorality which, according to the opinion universally expressed, prevails to a most awful extent in Nottingham. Much of the existing evil is to be traced to the vicious habits of parents, many of whom are utterly indifferent to the moral and physical welfare of their offspring." " Education of the girls more neglected even than that of boys. . . . Vast majority of females utterly ignorant. . . . Impossible to overstate evils which result

from this deplorable ignorance." . . . . "The medical practitioners of Birmingham forcibly point out the 'misery which ensues; improvidence, absence of all comfort, neglect of children, and alienation of all affection in families, and drunkenness on the part of the husband.' " And here I have to call the attention of the House to the testimony of a most respectable person, a simple mechanic; and I am very anxious to put forward the views of this individual; because, his statements are the result of long and personal experience. I refer to the evidence of Joseph Corbett, a mechanic of Birmingham. I confess that I should like to read the whole of the report. I recommend it strongly to your attention; it will be found in the appendix to Mr. Grainger's report. I cannot, however, refrain from quoting one or two passages of it. "I have seen," he says, "the entire ruin of many families from the waste of money and bad conduct of fathers and sons seeking amusement and pastime in an alehouse. From no other single cause alone does half so much demoralization and misery proceed." He then adds, "from my own experience," and here he spoke with feeling on the subject, for he referred to what he had seen in his own home, and what he had witnessed with respect to his parents:—"My own experience tells me that the instruction of the females in the work of a house, in teaching them to produce cheerfulness and comfort at the fireside, would prevent a great amount of misery and crime. There would be fewer drunken husbands and disobedient children. . . . As a working man, within my observation, female education is disgracefully neglected. I attach more importance to it than to anything else." I cannot think that any one will be displeased to hear such sentiments coming from a man in the situation of Joseph Corbett. Take this as a proof of what the working people may be

brought to, if they cease to be so utterly neglected. This is an instance, among many, to shew what thousands of right-hearted Englishmen, if you would but train them, you might raise up among the ranks of the operative classes.

This, Sir, is pretty nearly the whole of the statements which I have to make as to these districts; but there are other opinions, by persons of great authority on this subject, and which, with the permission of the House, I will read, although I have not permission to give the names of the writers. One gentleman, whose opportunities of observation are unequalled, speaks of “the present existence of a highly demoralised middle-aged and rising generation, worse and more debased than, I believe, any previous generation for the last three hundred years.” A clergyman, writing from one of the disturbed districts, says:—“The moral condition of the people is as bad as it is possible to be. Vice is unrebuked, unabashed; moral character of no avail. \* \* \* A spirit of disaffection prevails almost universally — magistrates, masters, pastors, and all superiors, are regarded as enemies and oppressors.” Another, in writing from the disturbed districts, states:—“I took down myself the following words, as they fell from the lips of a Chartist orator—‘The prevalence of intemperance and other vicious habits was the fault of the aristocracy and the mill-owners, who had neglected to provide the people with sufficient means of moral improvement, and would form an item of that great account which they would one day be called upon to render to a people indignant at the discovery of their own debasement.’ Another remarked:—‘A working man’s hall is opened on Sundays; and in this, 300 poor children are initiated into infidel and seditious principles.’ Another said:—‘A wild and satanic spirit is infused into the hearers.’” An officer of great experience to whom I

put the question—"What are the consequences to be apprehended if the present state of things be suffered to continue?" replies—"Unless a speedy alteration be made in the manufacturing districts, a fresh and more extensive outbreak will again occur, threatening loss to the whole nation.'"

Sir, I must now remark, that this condition of things prevails, more or less, throughout the whole of England, but particularly in the manufacturing and trading districts. The evil is not partial, it is almost universally diffused over the surface of the country. The time I might be allowed to occupy would be insufficient for me to travel through the whole of the details; but the House will find, in the second report of the Children's Employment Commission, which is devoted to the statement of their moral condition, the proof that it everywhere afflicts the country—it is nearly universal throughout the whole of the coal and iron-fields of Great Britain and Wales.—Look to the east of Scotland—one clergyman says:—"The condition of the lower classes is daily becoming worse in regard to education; and it is telling every day upon the moral and economic condition of the adult population." Another clergyman remarks:—"The country will be inevitably ruined, unless some steps are taken by the Legislature to secure education to the children of the working classes." Of North Wales we see it stated:—"Not one collier-boy in ten can read, so as to comprehend what he reads:" while of South Wales it is observed:—"Many are almost in a state of barbarism. Religious and moral training is out of the question. I should certainly be within bounds by saying that not one grown male or female in fifty can read." In the West of Scotland I find the same class of persons described as follows:—"A large portion of the colliery and ironwork



hands are living in an utterly depraved state, a moral degradation, which is entailing misery and disease on themselves, and disorder on the community." There is an equally lamentable state of things existing in Yorkshire, Durham, Lancashire, North Staffordshire and Cumberland. The replies of many of the children who were questioned by the commissioners, shew a state of things utterly disgraceful to the character of a Christian country. One of the children replied to a question put to him: "I never heard of France; I never heard of Scotland or Ireland; I do not know what America is." James Taylor, a boy eleven years old, said that he "has never heard of Jesus Christ; has never heard of God, but has heard the men in the pit say 'God damn them;' never heard of London." A girl eighteen years old, said, "I never heard of Christ at all." This indeed, the commissioner adds, is very common among children and young persons. She proceeded to say, "I never go to church or chapel;" again, "I don't know who God is." The sub-commissioner who visited Halifax, has recorded this sentence: "You have expressed surprise, says an employer, at Thomas Mitchell not having heard of God; I judge there are very few colliers here about that have."

Now can it be possible that such a state of things should exist without being attended with the most pernicious consequences? but, I will go further, and rejoice that it is not possible—an evil unfelt is an evil unseen; nothing but an urgent and a biting necessity will rouse us to action from our fancied security.

First, Sir, observe the effects that are produced by the drunken habits of the working-classes; you cannot have a more unanswerable proof of the moral degradation of a people. I know it is frequently asserted that inebriety has yielded, in many instances, to greater habits of tem-

perance ; but suppose it to be so ; the abatement is merely fractional ; and no guarantee is given, in an improved morality, that those persons will not return to their former vicious courses—the abatement, however, has not taken place, at least in those districts which were lately subjected to the enquiries of the Commissioners. Will the House now listen to some statements on this subject, which, lamentable as is the condition they disclose, describe but a tenth part of the evils springing out of this sad propensity ? In the year 1834 a Committee was appointed on the motion of Mr. Buckingham, to investigate the causes and effects of drunkenness. That Committee produced a report, which, by the by, has never received a tithe of the attention so valuable a document deserved ; from that report we learn that the sum annually expended by the working-people in the consumption of ardent spirits is estimated at twenty-five millions ! and “ I have no doubt,” says a witness of great experience, “ that it is, in fact, to a much larger extent.” I wrote to the chaplain of a county jail, a gentleman of considerable observation and judgment, and put to him the following question,—“ How much of the crime that brings prisoners to the jail can you trace to habits of intoxication ?” Now mark his reply ; “ In order to arrive at a just conclusion, I devoted several nights to a careful examination of the entries in my journals for a series of years, and although I had been impressed previously with a very strong conviction, derived from my own personal experience in attendance on the sick poor, that the practice of drinking was the great moral pestilence of the kingdom, I was certainly not prepared for the frightful extent to which I find it chargeable with the production of crime : I am within the mark in saying that three-fourths of the crime committed is the result of intemperance.” In corroboration of this, I will appeal to the very valuable evidence

given by Mr. J. Smith, the governor of the prison in Edinburgh. That witness states—"Having been for a number of years a missionary among the poor in Edinburgh, and having for two years had the charge of the house of refuge for the destitute, I have had, perhaps, the best opportunities of observing how far drunkenness produced ignorance, destitution, and crime; and the result of my experience is a firm conviction that, but for the effects of intemperance, directly and indirectly, instead of having five hundred prisoners in this prison at this time, there would not have been fifty."

The next document to which I shall refer, I regard as of a most important nature, and as one which deserves the most serious attention of the House. It is a memorial drawn up by a body of working men at Paisley, and addressed to their employers. It bears assuredly a remarkable testimony as to the moral effects of intemperance. I entertain a strong opinion of the great value of this paper, not only from the opinions which it expresses, but because it developes the sentiments of that class who are the agents and victims of this disastrous habit, and who speak, therefore, from practical knowledge. It states that "drunkenness is most injurious to the interests of the weavers as a body; drunkards are always on the brink of destitution. There can be no doubt that whatever depresses the moral worth of any body of workmen, likewise depresses their wages; and whatever elevates that worth, enables them to obtain and procure higher wages." This, Sir, in my opinion, is as sound political economy as ever has been spoken, written, or published. Again, I find it stated in the report of Mr. Buckingham's committee, that the estimated value of the property lost or deteriorated by drunkenness, either by shipwreck or mischiefs of a similar character, was not less than £50,000,000 a year.—These are the financial

losses ; and it may be easy to estimate, with sufficient accuracy, the pecuniary damage that society undergoes by these pernicious practices ; but it is not so easy to estimate the moral and social waste, the intellectual suffering and degradation which follow in their train. To that end I must here invite the attention of the House to evidence of another description ; I will lay before them the testimony of eminent medical men, who will shew what ruin of the intellect and the disposition attends the indulgence of these vicious enjoyments—we shall see how large a proportion of the cases of lunacy is ascribable to intoxication ; but we shall draw, moreover, this startling conclusion, that, if thousands from this cause are deprived of their reason and incarcerated in mad-houses, there must be many-fold more who, though they fall short of the point of absolute insanity, are impaired in their understanding and moral perceptions. The first medical authority to which I shall refer, is a very eminent physician, well known to many members of this house, I mean Dr. Corsellis, of the Wakefield Lunatic Asylum : “ I am led,” he says, “ to believe that intemperance is the exciting cause of insanity in about one-third of the cases of this institution ;” and he adds, “ the proportion at Glasgow is about twenty-six per cent., and at Aberdeen eighteen per cent.” Dr. Browne, of the Crichton Asylum, Dumfries, says—“ The applications for the introduction of individuals who have lost reason from excessive drinking continue to be very numerous.” At Northampton, the superintendent of the asylum says—“ Amongst the causes of insanity intemperance predominates.” At Montrose, Dr. Poole, the head of the asylum, says—“ Twenty-four per cent. of insane cases from intemperance.” Dr. Prichard, who is well known, not only in the medical, but also in the literary world, writes to me that—“ The medical writers of all countries reckon intemperance among the



most influential exciting causes of insanity. Esquirol, who has been most celebrated on the continent for his researches into the statistics of madness, and who is well known to have extended his enquiries into all countries, was of opinion that “this cause gives rise to one-half of the cases of insanity that occur in Great Britain.” Dr. Prichard adds that “this fact, although startling, is confirmed by many instances. It was found that, in an asylum at Liverpool, to which four hundred and ninety-five patients had been admitted, not less than two hundred and fifty-seven had become insane from intemperance.” It is confirmed as a scientific fact by statements of American physicians almost without exception. Dr. Rensselaer, of the United States, says, that, “in his opinion, one half of the cases of insanity which came under the care of medical men in that country arose more or less from the use of strong drink.”—These things, Sir, not only inflict misery and suffering on a very large class of the present community, but they entail a heavy loss on the country at large. It cannot be denied that the state has an interest in the health and strength of her sons; but the effects of various diseases on one generation are transmitted with intensity to another! I may also mention, to support these opinions, that the number of admissions to the Somerset Hospital, Cape Town, in the course of a year and nine months, was 1,050, and of these not less than 763 were the result of intemperance. It was also found, by *post mortem* examinations, that in the same period the number of deaths in that hospital, which was caused by intemperance, was not less than eight out of ten. Now look to the pauperism it produces; one instance shall suffice: Mr. Chadwick gave in evidence before the Committee on Drunkenness, in 1834,—“The contractor for the management of the poor in Lambeth, and other parishes, stated to me that he once investigated the cause of pau-

perism in the cases of paupers then under his charge. The inquiry, he says, was conducted for some months, as I investigated every new case, and I found in nine cases out of ten the main cause was the ungovernable inclination for fermented liquors."

Next, Sir, vice is expensive to the public ; Mr. Collins, in his valuable statistics of Glasgow, observes,—“The people will cost us much, whether we will or not ; if we will not suffer ourselves to be taxed for their religious instruction, we must suffer to be taxed for the punishment and repression of crime.” I will now just give a short estimate of the amount of the expense to which the country is subjected directly for the suppression of crime. I find that the expense of jails in 1841 was £137,449 ; during the same period the expense of houses of correction was £129,163 ; making together a total of £256,612. The expense of criminal prosecutions in 1841 was £170,521 ; the charge for the conveyance of prisoners was £23,242 ; the charge for the conveyance of transports to the hulks, &c. £8,195 ; and the expense for vagrants £7,167. These items make together the sum of £209,125. The expense of the rural police, and it should be remembered that this is only for a few counties, is £139,228. Thus the charges under the three heads which I have mentioned, amount, in a single year, to £604,965. But here, Sir, is a document well deserving, I think, of the attention of the House,—a curious illustration of the facts we are asserting ; I have not been able to verify it myself, but I will take it as stated—In the county of Lancaster, in 1832, the number of criminal cases tried at the assizes was 126, and the average charge for each of them £40. The number of cases tried at the sessions was 2,587, and the average charge for each of these was £7. 19s. The aggregate amount of charge was £25,656. Now in addition to this average charge, let us take the

estimate cost for the transportation across the seas of each person convicted at £25. This would be a gross sum for the cost of each prosecution of £65;—if the calculation, then, of Mr. Burgess be correct, that eleven shillings in the year will supply the education of one child for that term, we must confess that for the expense of a single convict, we might, during the space of twelve months, give moral and religious education to one hundred and seventeen children. Nevertheless, Sir, it is a melancholy fact, that while the country disburses the sums I have mentioned, and more too, for the punishment of crime, the State devotes but thirty thousand a year to the infusion of virtue ; and yet, I ask you, could you institute a happier and healthier economy in your finances, than to reduce your criminal, so to speak, and increase your moral expenditure? Difficulties may lie in your way; mortifications may follow your attempts, but you cannot fail of raising some to the dignity of virtuous men, and many to the rank of tranquil and governable citizens.

I have not here included an estimate of the loss inflicted on society by plunder, violence, and neglect; nor can I arrive at it; it must, however, be necessarily very large. Let us use as an approximation, a statement made by a late member of this House (Mr. Slaney) that, in one year, in the town of Liverpool alone, the loss by plunder was calculated at the enormous sum of seven hundred thousand pounds.

Thus far, Sir, I have endeavoured to lay before you an outline of our present condition, and to collect, into one point of view, a few of the more prominent mischiefs. A partial remedy for these evils will be found in the moral and religious culture of the infant mind ; but this is not all : we must look further, and do more, if we desire to place the working-classes in such a condition that, the lessons they have learned as children, they may have freedom to practise as adults.

Now, if it be true, as most undoubtedly it is, that the State has a deep interest in the moral and physical prosperity of all her children, she must not terminate her care with the years of infancy, but extend her control and providence over many other circumstances that affect the working-man's life. Without entering here into the nature and variety of those practical details, which might be advantageously taught in addition to the first and indispensable elements, we shall readily perceive that many things are requisite, even to the adult, to secure to him, so far as is possible, the well-being of his moral and physical condition. I speak not now of laws and regulations to abridge, but to enlarge his freedom; not to limit his rights, but to multiply his opportunities of enjoying them; laws and regulations which shall give him what all confess to be his due; which shall relieve him from the danger of temptations he would willingly avoid, and under which he cannot but fall; and which shall place him, in many aspects of health, happiness, and possibilities of virtue, in that position of independence and security, from which, under the present state of things, he is too often excluded.

Sir, there are many evils of this description which might be urged; but I shall name three only, as indications of what I mean, and as having a most injurious and most lasting effect on the moral and physical condition of an immense portion of our people. I will briefly state them; and there will then be no difficulty in shewing their connection with the present motion; and how deep and how immediate is their influence on the morals of infants and adults, of children and parents; and how utterly hopeless are all systems of education, so long as you suffer them extensively to prevail.

The first I shall take is the truck system. Now hear what Mr. Horne, the sub-commissioner, says on this subject:—"The truck system encourages improvidence, by



preventing the chance of a habit of saving, for nobody can save food. It prevents a family from obtaining a sufficient supply of clothes, and more comfortable furniture, in proportion to the possession of which it is always found that the working-man becomes more steady, industrious, and careful. It therefore amounts to a prevention of good conduct." In another place, he says: "The poor working man never sees the colour of a coin, all his wages are consumed in food, and of the very worst quality; and to prevent the chance of his having a single penny in his possession, the reckonings were postponed from week to week, until sometimes two or three months had elapsed." Now, as to the corrupting effects of this system, Mr. Horne, in his report, emphatically says:—"One final remark should, however, be made on the particular evil of the system, which principally relates to the moral condition of the children and young persons, nothing can be worse than the example set by the truck system—an example which is constantly before the eyes of the children, and in which they grow up, familiarised with the grossest frauds, the subtlest tricks, and the most dishonest evasions, habitually practised by their masters, parents, and other adults, in the very face of law and justice, and with perfect impunity." Such is the result of this part of the inquiry made by Mr. Horne. That gentleman uses the emphatic language that the truck system not only familiarises the mind, and the mind too of the child, with the grossest frauds, but that it tends to prevent the practice of any of the moral virtues. See, too, the effect as stated in the evidence produced before Parliament. It is notorious that the system has led to the most serious effects in several parts of the country. The whole man suffers; his experience; his thrifty habits; his resolutions of forethought; he is widely and justly discontented, becomes a bad subject, and ripe

for mischief. In 1834 the existence of the truck system drove the mining districts of South Wales into open rebellion; it produced the disturbances that took place in Staffordshire in 1842; and no one can calculate the flood of the moral and physical mischiefs that devastated those counties as the result of their outbreak.

I will take, in the second place, the payment of wages in public-houses, beer-shops, and localities of that description. You have recognised the principle of interdicting such a practice in the Colliery-bill of last year; let me shew how necessary it is that a law of that kind should become universal:—"Payments of wages in cash," says Mr. Horne, "are made in a public-house (for the convenience, they pretend, of change), where it is required that every man shall spend a shilling as a rule, which is to be spent in drink. Boys have also to spend proportionately to their wages (generally sixpence), and either they thus learn to drink by taking their share, or, if they cannot, some adult drinks it for them till they can. The keeper of this house generally delays the settling of accounts, so as to give more time for drinking previously." Now, Sir, I have frequently heard discredit thrown on the exertions that have been made to promote the improvement in the moral condition of the working classes, in consequence of the criminal conduct of some who had received a moral and religious education. No doubt it is true that persons may be found in jails who have received their education in Sunday and other schools; but there is many a man who will trace his ruin to the practice I mention; whole families have been pauperized; and, by a perverted logic, moral teaching itself is declared to be useless, because the system we allow has made moral practice next to impossible.

The third, is the state of the dwellings of the poor—I

will at once put before the House a picture drawn by an able hand ;—Captain Miller, the valuable superintendent of the police at Glasgow, writes thus: “In the very centre of the city there is an accumulated mass of squalid wretchedness, which is probably unequalled in any other town in the British dominions. There is concentrated every thing that is wretched, dissolute, loathsome, and pestilential. These places are filled by a population of many thousands of miserable creatures. The houses in which they live are unfit even for stys; and every apartment is filled with a promiscuous crowd of men, women, and children: all in the most revolting state of filth and squalor. In many of the houses there is scarcely any ventilation; dunghills lie in the vicinity of the dwellings; and from the extremely defective sewerages, filth of every kind constantly accumulates. In these horrid dens the most abandoned characters of the city are collected; from whence they nightly issue to disseminate diseases, and to pour upon the town every species of crime and abomination.”—Will any man after this tell me that it is to any purpose to take children for the purposes of education during two hours a day, and then turn them back for twenty-two to such scenes of vice, and filth, and misery? I am quite certain this statement is not exaggerated, I have been on the spot and seen it myself; and not only there, but I have found a similar state of things existing at Leeds, at Manchester, and in London. It is impossible for language to describe the horrid and disgraceful scenes that are exposed to the sight in these places, and I am sure no one can recollect, without the most painful feelings, the thousands and hundreds of thousands, who ought to be the subjects of any system of education, that are hopelessly congregated in these dens of filth, of suffering, and infamy.

Turn, then, to the invaluable report of Mr. Chadwick on

the sanitary state of the population, which has just been presented to the House. He shews clearly how indispensable it is to establish some better regulations with regard to the residences of the people, if you wish to make them a moral and religious race, and that all your attempts at their reformation will be useless, if steps are not taken to promote their decency and comfort. He says, amongst the conclusions at which he arrives towards the end of his report:—"That the formation of all habits of cleanliness is obstructed by defective supplies of water; that the annual loss of life from filth and bad ventilation is greater than the loss from death or wounds in any wars in which the country has been engaged in modern times; that of the 43,000 cases of widowhood, and 112,000 cases of destitute orphanage, relieved from the poor's-rate in England alone, it appears that the greatest proportions of deaths of the heads of families occurred from the above specified and other removable causes; that their ages were under forty-five years—that is to say, thirteen years below the natural probabilities of life, as shewn by the experience of the whole population of Sweden; that the younger population, bred up under noxious physical agencies, is inferior in physical organization and general health to a population preserved from the presence of such agencies; that the population, so exposed, is less susceptible of moral influences, and the effects of education are more transient, than with a healthy population; that these adverse circumstances tend to produce an adult population short-lived, improvident, reckless, and intemperate, and with habitual avidity for sensual gratification; that these habits lead to the abandonment of all the conveniences and the decencies of life, and especially lead to the over-crowding of their homes, which is destructive to the morality as well as to the health of large classes of both sexes; that defective town-cleansing fosters habits of the



most abject degradation, tending to the demoralization of large numbers of human beings, who subsist by means of what they find amid the various filth accumulated in neglected streets and by-places." Now, Sir, can any one gainsay the assertion that this state of things is cruel, disgusting, perilous?—indifference, despair, neglect of every kind—of the household, the children, the moral and the physical part—must follow in the train of such evils; the contemplation of them distresses the standers by, it exasperates the sufferer and his whole class, it breeds discontent and every bad passion; and then, when disaffection stalks abroad, we are alarmed, and cry out that we are fallen upon evil times, and so we are; but it is not because poverty is always seditious, but because wealth is too frequently oppressive.

This, Sir, completes the picture I desired to lay before the House; it has been imperfectly, and I fear tediously drawn. There is, however, less risk in taxing the patience than in taxing the faith of indulgent hearers. I have not presumed to propose a scheme, because I have ever thought that such a mighty undertaking demands the collective deliberation and wisdom of the executive, backed by the authority and influence of the Crown. But what does this picture exhibit. Mark, Sir, first, the utter inefficiency of our penal code—of our capital and secondary punishments. The country is wearied with pamphlets and speeches on gaol-discipline, model-prisons, and corrective processes; meanwhile crime advances at a rapid pace; many are discharged because they cannot be punished, and many become worse by the very punishment they undergo—punishment is disarmed of a large part of its terrors, because it no longer can appeal to any sense of shame;—and all this, because we will obstinately persist in setting our own wilfulness against the experience

of mankind and the wisdom of revelation, and believe that we can regenerate the hardened man while we utterly neglect his pliant childhood. You are right to punish those awful miscreants who make a trade of blasphemy, and pollute the very atmosphere by their foul exhibitions; but you will never subdue their disciples and admirers, except by the implements of another armoury. You must draw from the great depository of truth all that can create and refine a sound public opinion—all that can institute and diffuse among the people the feelings and practices of morality. I hope I am not dictatorial in repeating here, that criminal tables and criminal statistics furnish no estimate of a nation's disorder. Culprits, such as they exhibit, are but the representatives of the mischief, spawned by the filth and corruption of the times. Were the crimes of these offenders the sum total of the crimes of England, although we should lament for the individuals, we might disregard the consequences; but the danger is wider, deeper, fiercer; and no one who has heard these statements and believes them, can hope that twenty years more will pass without some mighty convulsion, and displacement of the whole system of society.

Next, Sir, observe that our very multitude oppresses us; and oppresses us, too, with all the fearful weight of a blessing converted into a curse. The King's strength ought to be in the multitude of his people; and so it is; not, however, such a people as we must shortly have; but in a people happy, healthy, and virtuous; "*Sacra Deûm, sanctique patres.*" Is that our condition of present comfort or prospective safety? You have seen in how many instances the intellect is impaired, and even destroyed by the opinions and practices of our moral world; honest industry will decline, energy will be blunted, and whatever shall remain of zeal be perverted to the worst and

most perilous uses. An evil state of morals engenders and diffuses a ferocious spirit; the mind of man is as much affected by moral epidemics, as his body by disorders; thence arise murders, blasphemies, seditions, every thing that can tear prosperity from nations, and peace from individuals. See, Sir, the ferocity of disposition that your records disclose; look at the savage treatment of children and apprentices; and imagine the awful results, if such a spirit were let loose upon society. Is the character of your females nothing?—and yet hear the language of an eye-witness, and one long and deeply conversant with their character; “They are becoming similar to the female followers of an army, wearing the garb of women, but actuated by the worst passions of men; in every riot or outbreak in the manufacturing districts the women are the leaders and excitors of the young men to violence. The language they indulge in is of the most horrid description—in short, while they are demoralised themselves, they demoralise all that come within their reach.” People, Mr. Speaker, will oftentimes administer consolation by urging that a mob of Englishmen will never be disgraced by the atrocities of the Continent. Now, Sir, apart from the fact that one hundredth part of “the reign of terror” is sufficient to annihilate all virtue and all peace in society, we have never, except in 1780, and a few years ago at Bristol and Nottingham, seen a mob of our countrymen in triumphant possession. Conflagration then and plunder devastated the scene; nor were they forgotten in the riots of last year, when, during the short-lived anarchy of an hour, they fired I know not how many houses within the district of the Potteries.

Consider, too, the rapid progress of time. In ten years from this hour—no long period in the history of a nation—



all who are nine years of age will have reached the age of nineteen years ; a period in which, with the few years that follow, there is the least sense of responsibility, the power of the liveliest action, and the greatest disregard of human suffering and human life. The early ages are of incalculable value ; an idle reprobate of fourteen is almost irreclaimable ; every year of delay abstracts from us thousands of useful fellow-citizens ; nay, rather, it adds them to the ranks of viciousness, of misery, and of disorder. So long, Sir, as this plague-spot is festering among our people, all our labours will be in vain ; our recent triumphs will avail us nothing—to no purpose, while we are rotten at heart, shall we toil to improve our finances, to expand our commerce, and explore the hidden sources of our difficulty and alarm. We feel that all is wrong, we grope at noonday as though it were night ; disregarding the lessons of history and the Word of God, that there is neither hope nor strength, nor comfort, nor peace, but in a virtuous, a “ wise, and an understanding people.”

But, if we will retrace our steps, and do the first works—if we will apply ourselves earnestly, in faith and fear, to this necessary service, there lie before us many paths of peace, many prospects of encouragement. Turn where you will ; examine the agents of every honest calling, and you will find that the educated man is the safest and the best in every profession. I might quote the testimony of distinguished officers, both military and naval, and they will tell you that no discipline is so vigorous as morality. I have here the earnest declaration of various manufacturers, that trustworthiness and skill will ever follow on religious training. You have heard the opinions of the judges at the late special assizes, more particularly the charge of that eminent lawyer and good man, Chief Justice Tindal. I have read



correspondence of the clergy in the disturbed districts, and they boldly assert, that very few belonging to their congregations, and none belonging to their schools, were found among the insurgents against the public peace; because such persons well know that, however grievous their wrongs, they owe obedience to the laws, not on a calculation of forces, but for conscience' sake.

Nor let us, Sir, put out of mind this great and stirring consideration, that the moral condition of England seems destined by Providence to lead the moral condition of the world. Year after year we are sending forth thousands and hundreds of thousands of our citizens to people the vast solitudes and islands of another hemisphere; the Anglo-Saxon race will shortly overspread half the habitable globe. What a mighty and what a rapid addition to the happiness of mankind, if these thousands should carry with them, and plant in those distant regions, our freedom, our laws, our morality, and our religion!

This, Sir, is the ground of my appeal to this House; the plan that I venture to propose, and the argument by which I sustain it. It is, I know, but a portion of what the country requires; and even here we shall have, no doubt, disappointments to undergo, and failures to deplore; it will, nevertheless, bear for us abundant fruit. We owe to the poor of our land a weighty debt. We call them improvident and immoral, and so many of them are; but that improvidence and that immorality are the results, in a great measure, of our neglect, and, in not a little, of our example. We owe them, too, the debt of kinder language, and more frequent intercourse.—This is no fanciful obligation; our people are more alive than any other to honest zeal for their cause, and sympathy with their necessities, which, fall though it often-times may on unimpressible hearts, never fails to find some that it comforts, and many

that it softens. Only let us declare, this night, that we will enter on a novel and a better course—that we will seek their temporal, through their eternal welfare—and the half of our work will then have been achieved. There are many hearts to be won, many minds to be instructed, and many souls to be saved: “*Oh Patria! oh Divum domus!*” —the blessing of God will rest upon our endeavours; and the oldest among us may perhaps live to enjoy, for himself and for his children, the opening day of the immortal, because the moral glories of the British empire.

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The following TABLE, showing the state of parts of London, which it was intended to quote, was accidentally omitted.

*The London City Mission Report of two districts just examined, 1842:—*

In a small district immediately contiguous to Holborn

Hill, found, families	-	-	-	-	-	-	103
Consisting of, persons	-	-	-	-	-	-	391
From six years and upwards, could not read						-	280
Of these, above twenty years of age			-	-	-		119
In five courts and alleys in the Cow-cross district:—							
Heads of families	-	-	-	-	-	-	158
Cannot read	-	-	-	-	-	-	102
Young persons, between seven and twenty-two						-	106
Cannot read	-	-	-	-	-	-	77

“Can we be surprised,” says the Report, “at the number of public criminals? Neighbourhoods such as these chiefly supply our jails with inmates. So late as October last there were in the House of Correction alone, 973 prisoners, exclusive of children, and out of these 717 had no education at all.”

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OF EDUCATION, AT ITS FIFTH ANNUAL SESSION, IN THE CHAPEL OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, ON THE 30<sup>TH</sup> OF AUGUST, 1855.

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BY F. A. P. BARNARD, LL. D.,

PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS AND ASTRONOMY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI.

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RE-PRINTED FROM NOS. II. AND III. OF THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATION.

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1856.



#### IV. ON IMPROVEMENTS PRACTICABLE IN AMERICAN COLLEGES.\*

BY F. A. P. BARNARD, LL.D.,

Professor of Mathematics and Astronomy in the University of Mississippi.

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THE subject of collegiate education in the United States is one which, for the last thirty years, has occupied a large space in the public mind. Within that period our college system, in form as it exists, has been made a subject of frequent and severe stricture; and the question has been seriously raised, whether this system is not inadequate to accomplish the ends of higher education, and even whether it is not incapable, without a radical reorganization, of being brought into harmony with any system by which these ends may be better secured. On the one hand, among the people themselves, there has sprung up a demand for something more practical, something which shall specifically fit men for the ordinary occupations of life, which shall prepare them to become at once mechanics and farmers, engineers and manufacturers,\* as well as to enter upon what are called the learned professions. On the other hand, that more limited class of men among us, who have pursued the study of letters or science far beyond the limit at which the multitude pause, have painfully felt, in the prosecution of their efforts for self-improvement, the want, under which our country labors, of those aids to higher acquisitions and profounder learning which they see so abundantly to exist in foreign lands. They, too, have naturally first looked to our colleges, in the hope of being able to elevate them, or some of them, to the rank of schools for men—schools embracing, within the range of their teaching, the entire circle of human knowledge, and capable of conducting the inquirer, in every department of the intellectual field, to the utmost limit which discovery or investigation has yet reached.

The practical men, again, seduced by the plausibility of their leading idea, and dazzled by the splendor of those achievements by which modern science has, under our own immediate observation, been recently urging forward, with a rapidity almost miraculous, the world's progress in all the useful arts, have declaimed loudly against

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\* A paper read before the American Association for the Advancement of Education, New York, August 31, 1855.

the value of classical learning, and even demanded its entire exclusion from the course of collegiate instruction. Scholars, on the contrary, have complained that the attention bestowed upon these subjects is already too small; that the study of the ancient languages has a value, as a means of mental development, which nothing can adequately replace; that the space given to this study is less now than it was forty years ago; and finally, that, to the opprobrium of our system of higher education, examples of sound and thorough classical scholarship, among our graduates, are beginning to be the rarest of all phenomena.

In the mean time our colleges, embarrassed by these opposing pressures, have yielded, sometimes in one direction and sometimes in another. Nearly all of them have greatly enlarged the circle of studies which they undertake to teach, and some of them have conceded to their students the privilege of selecting, from among the number, those which they prefer to pursue. The result has been such as is the usual fate of all compromises, and such as must invariably attend the effort to accomplish what is impossible. None of the complaining parties are satisfied. The college still fails to furnish the special and technical education which the practical man requires, and it still more lamentably fails to provide for that higher culture which is supplementary to mere intellectual training. It is evident that there has been error somewhere, either in the original and fundamental idea of the college itself, or in the more recent modifications of its plan of operations. In our general system of education, the college has either a proper and peculiar function to fulfill, or it has not. If it has, it can neither step aside from this, nor rise above it, without leaving a space which must be occupied by some institution designed to do the work it leaves undone. If it has not, then we have been in error on this subject for two hundred years.

In considering the topic which has been assigned to me, it is proper, first, to observe, that if our collegiate system is in fact materially defective, there exist certain serious obstacles in the way of any sudden and sweeping reforms. Could we agree upon the measures which ought to be adopted, we have none but a moral power to enforce their introduction. No royal or imperial decree can be resorted to, to control the operations of our colleges, or constrain their universal assent to any material innovations. Truth is, indeed, powerful, and will ultimately prevail. But truth is as slow as it is powerful, and the lessons of history admonish us that its triumphs are often long delayed. Our colleges are bodies not only independent of each other, and independent of any general controlling



power, but they are also, for the most part, independent of the authority of the local legislatures of the States to which they belong. Though chartered by legislative enactments, few legislatures have reserved to themselves the right to look into or direct their operations; and, if all had done so, the power would still have been divided among more than thirty distinct State governments.

The arrangements of colleges are not even, to any great extent, in the hands of their own faculties. They are subject to the management of Boards of Governors, Overseers, or Trustees, men usually selected, no doubt, because of their presumed fitness for their stations, and because of the interest they are presumed to take in the cause of education; but whom it has, nevertheless, been found hitherto impossible to induce to devote any large amount of their attention to the institutions under their care. These are the men whom truth must reach before reforms, if they are desirable, can be made certain.

Nearly all our colleges are, furthermore, the creations of the different religious denominations which divide our people. They are regarded as important instrumentalities, through which the peculiarities of doctrine which distinguish their founders are to be maintained, propagated, or defended. It is this which has led to the great multiplication of collegiate institutions in our country, and which is daily adding to their number. It is this which has secured to them their endowments; and though we may regret to see the public munificence thus divided and scattered among many feeble institutions, instead of being concentrated in a few which it would suffice to elevate to the highest rank, yet we must not forget that, in the absence of a motive more powerful than mere devotion to the cause of education, this munificence would have been in a great measure withheld. Facts which have fallen under my immediate observation satisfy me, that this religious element, mingling itself with our system of collegiate education, is powerful enough to interpose a difficulty, almost insurmountable, in the way of all those wise and liberal projects by which it has been hoped to secure a system of perfectly free education, of the highest order, open to all at the expense of the State. I am persuaded, that if every State in the Union were to establish for itself a college, furnished with every appliance for imparting instruction, on the most liberal scale, and officered by the highest talent the country affords, providing, however, as it must, against the intrusion into such an institution of any sectarian bias, it would fail to divert, to any great extent, from existing institutions, the patronage which they now receive, and would fail to prevent the erection of new ones upon the same principle.

Again, it must be admitted that our college system, such as it is, whether good or bad, has taken a strong hold upon the confidence of the people. Though an acknowledged offshoot of a foreign system, it has struck its roots deep among us, has accommodated itself to our circumstances, and has proved itself, upon the whole, a thriving plant. If it has been made a subject of complaint, we must not fail to bear in mind that, in all questions of reform or revolution, it is the discontented few who make themselves heard, while the contented multitude live on in silence. Before any large changes can be introduced into our present system, popular opinion is to be extensively operated on, and fully satisfied of their necessity.

This system, then, must be accepted as an existing reality—a reality which we can not set aside or refuse to recognize, if we would, as a part of our general system of education. It is strong in a pecuniary sense. I suppose that no less a sum than fifteen millions of dollars—probably much more—has been already invested in it, and is interested in its preservation. It is strong in a moral sense, having enlisted in its behalf the convictions of the great majority of our citizens, in favor of its substantial value. It is peculiarly strong, in its alliance with the religious sympathies of our people. Our business, then, is not to inquire, what we would do if we had the work to begin anew, but what shall we do with the thing which we have? If, in the comprehensive scheme of general education which we desire to build up, commencing with the rudiments of knowledge and ending with its largest expansion, our colleges occupy an anomalous position; if they fail to interweave themselves with the schools below, taking the learner where they leave him, and carrying him forward in the equable development of his mental powers to the point where—at least until we are provided with institutions of a still higher character—he must be left to educate himself, we must endeavor gradually to mould them into the shape we would have them assume. And if we can not force them to extend themselves downward—as I believe we can not—so as to secure a more efficient performance of the work which we call preparatory, nor upward, so as to do that work for which we have yet made no provision at all, we must not regard these things as evidences of the defects of our college system, but as proofs that our general system itself is wanting in completeness.

The suggestions which I have to offer will be, therefore, entirely simple, plain, and practical, and will be founded on the assumption, that there is a specific function which the college ought to fulfill. This function is the systematic development and discipline of the faculties of the mind, in due proportion and in a natural order. And

the first question which we have to settle, in regard to it, is, obviously *What course of instruction* is best adapted to secure this result? Now much of the discussion which has, of late years, agitated the public mind on this subject, seems to me to have originated in an entire misconception of the proper business of a college. If such discussions had, in all cases, ended, as they began, in words merely, allusion to them here might be unnecessary. But this is by no means the case. In a number of instances they have resulted in breaking up the long-established and time-honored course of collegiate instruction, and substituting in its place something new and materially different. Nor yet could this be a subject of reasonable complaint, provided that, in the novel schemes, we could find evidence of a distinct recognition of the proper function of the college. But so far is this from having been the case, that the entire argument, by which these innovations have been urged and indicated, has been founded on the tacit assumption, that the college has no such proper function. It has, for example, been maintained, with a great deal of warmth, that our colleges have, in later years, failed to keep pace with the rapid progress of human knowledge; that the subjects of study, to which they mainly confine the student, are in part obsolete and in part useless; that they take no account of the prospective pursuits of the young men whom they undertake to train, but subject all alike to the same unvarying intellectual regimen, and, in short, that they are far in arrear of the demands of an eminently utilitarian and practical age. We have, accordingly, been accustomed to hear the value of classical learning discussed, as if its only claim to attention lay in the directness with which it is capable of being turned to the pecuniary advantage of its possessor; and we have heard the usefulness of the higher branches of the mathematics brought to the same test by which we would judge of arithmetic, surveying, or the principles of machinery. How, it is demanded, will it help a man, in this stirring world, to have spent some of his best years in the perusal of Greek and Latin authors? How will it help him—even to communicate with his fellow-men—to have attained any degree of proficiency in the use of languages, in which men have long since ceased to communicate? Or, how will it contribute to his success as a lawyer, as a physician, as a merchant, or as a divine, that he is deeply versed in the mysteries of mathematical analysis, or familiar with the theory of the lunar perturbations?

All this course of argumentation rests, it will be observed, on a simple *petitio principii*. It is taken for granted that the college course ought not to embrace, and was never intended to embrace, any thing which should not be capable of a direct practical appli-



cation, in the business of life. This postulate being granted, the triumphant conclusions of the objectors are at once legitimate and unavoidable. And not only so, but those who persist in advocating the perpetuation of our present system of college education, however in other matters they may be respectable for their intelligence, must, in regard to this, be admitted to be wanting in common sense.

But no such postulate can be received. The studies condemned were never selected, nor is their selection now defended, on the ground that they are to form any necessary and immediate element of those pursuits by which the learner is, in after life, to gain his daily bread. They were selected because of their pre-eminent value as instruments of mental discipline. It is unnecessary for me, on this occasion, to enter into any argument, upon a subject which has already been so often and so ably discussed, and in which I should only travel over ground which has been beaten again and again. I hold it to be time that, on this question, we should be permitted to believe, that there are certain principles, too well established to leave room for further controversy; and, for the sake of explicitness, though they may now be regarded as sufficiently elementary, I will venture to recapitulate them here.

1. Education, in its widest sense, signifies the development, discipline, and cultivation of all the powers and faculties of man, physical, mental, and moral.

2. Intellectual training, which is that which for the moment concerns us, implies the exercise of the mental powers, in a natural order, and in just proportion, upon subjects of thought.

3. The subjects which furnish the most beneficial discipline are not necessarily, nor even usually, those which are most immediately related to the ordinary pursuits of men in life.

4. Though, in the process of education, we necessarily impart knowledge, yet the best education by no means implies the largest amount of that knowledge which the world calls practical.

5. In arranging a plan of studies, designed to furnish a complete system of intellectual discipline, the question, How far the subjects selected may have an immediately practical value, is one of secondary importance. But,

6. Other things being equal—that is to say, when the choice is between subjects of similar disciplinary character—that which affords the largest amount of useful knowledge is of course to be preferred.

Assuming these principles to be true, I say then that the business of our colleges is to educate, and not to inform. And no argument, which goes to decry the freedom with which they employ mathe-



mathematical or classical studies, as instruments of mental discipline, on the score that these subjects are less practical in their nature than something else might be, is valid, until it shall have been shown—a thing which has never yet been done—that this something else has an equal educational value with the studies so denounced. I am not prepared, therefore, to assent to the judiciousness of any of those proposed changes of our present plan of college education, by which the amount either of classical or of mathematical study, now exacted, shall be materially diminished. And, entertaining these opinions, I am equally unprepared to admit the propriety of abolishing the *curriculum* of study, or even of introducing parallel courses of study, if these courses are to run through any considerable portion of the time now devoted to college education.

The necessity of a curriculum is one which grows out of the nature of things. Experience has shown, that a certain amount of faithful labor, expended in due proportion, under the direction of minds already proficient, upon a suitable variety of subjects of human knowledge, properly selected, is sufficient so far to accomplish the main ends of education, that the student may be safely afterward abandoned to his own guidance. But this due proportionment, this suitable varying of subjects, can not with propriety be left to the arrangement of chance. These things must be matters of previous regulation and adjustment; and this regulation and adjustment, however they may be made, must end in the creation of a curriculum of study. Another consideration conspires to the same result. If education is to have any system, if the Degree, which is the certificate of the highest education for which our system provides, is to have any definite meaning, and is to be an evidence that he who receives it has been subjected to a mental training comparable to that of any other graduate, then there must be some standard of comparison to which all may be brought, and by which their fitness for graduation may be tested. Such a standard is found in the curriculum, either when, as in the English universities, it serves to guide the final examinations of all candidates for graduation, or when, as in most American colleges, a record is preserved of the daily performances of every student, upon each subject which it embraces, for use at the termination of the course.

A curriculum being, therefore, an evident necessity, it is next in order, to consider the principles upon which it should be constructed. These appear to be the following :

1. The curriculum should embrace the number and variety of studies properly disciplinary, and the amount of each, which is necessary to an adequately thorough intellectual training. In the

choice of these, the question, How far they are practical, is to be made entirely subordinate to the higher objects of education.

2. It should *not* embrace a greater amount than can be well and completely mastered, within the period of time over which it is spread.

3. The foregoing condition being fulfilled, it *may* embrace other studies, chosen simply because of their value as subjects of knowledge.

If, therefore, our course of collegiate study is to continue to be restricted to a definite term of years, and if the space of time allotted to it is to be no more than sufficient for the purposes of a thorough intellectual training, we are evidently driven to the necessity of denying the propriety of selecting any studies, to form a part of the course, simply on the ground that they are practical.

Let it here be observed, that I am employing the word practical, in this place, in that entirely utilitarian sense in which it has been so much used in public strictures upon the American college system. But I am by no means of the number of those who would withhold this epithet, when understood in its largest and most liberal sense, from any of the studies which we require our students to pursue, however little affinity they may seem to have to those occupations in which the same young men are to become immersed, so soon as the period of their college education is past. Nothing can possess a higher practical value, to any man, than that which makes him a man, in the fullest sense of the word; which gives him habits of clear, systematic, and independent thought; which sharpens his penetration, invigorates his powers of reasoning, teaches him to analyze, chastens and refines his taste, subdues to method his insubordinate imagination, and confers upon him the priceless gift of lucid and forcible utterance. Considered from this point of view, the studies of the college course, however abstract, barren, or profitless they may appear, to a superficial observer, possess a practical value of the very highest and most inestimable character, since their beneficial effects are spread out over the entire life, and are daily manifest in every variety of circumstances by which men are surrounded. If we compare the success in life of the few—for it is but a few after all—who have early enjoyed the advantages of the training which our colleges afford—the average eminence which they attain, in their respective professions and pursuits, the labors by which they command the attention of mankind, the variety and extent of the researches in which they engage, the boldness and success with which they push inquiry into the regions of the unknown, the controlling influence which they often exert in

public affairs, and all those various modes in which a cultivated mind displays its superiority over matter and over other minds—if we compare these things with the degree to which the same things are, upon the whole, true of those who in youth have been denied similar advantages, we can not hesitate to attribute the observed results, in the main, to that early mental discipline which is furnished by these very studies, which we are so accustomed to hear denounced as wanting in practical value. Nor will it be any reply to this, to point, on the one hand, to those, for we need not go far to find them, whose college education has failed to lift them above a respectable mediocrity of standing; nor, on the other, to those more remarkable individuals who have risen to eminence in spite of the deficiencies of their early education. If nature has made men essentially small, no education can render them great; or if gifted youths choose to neglect their early advantages, or to idle away their subsequent lives, the consequences of their neglect, or their indolence, must rest upon them. To use again the names of such men as Franklin, and Watt, and Hugh Miller, as arguments to depreciate the value of collegiate education, is no more to the purpose than it would be to declaim against common schools, because some persons have taught themselves to read. The true form in which to place the argument is this: If these men have done so much without education, what might they not have done with it!

The question then arises, How far it is true that the curriculum of study, in our American colleges, is consistent with the principles according to which I have ventured to assert, it should be formed. I speak of our colleges in general, as if they prescribed to themselves, in all cases, the same invariable programme; and this is so far a fact as to relieve me of the necessity of specifying any minor differences which may exist among them. It is, in the first place, true, that when we compare the list of college studies, as we find it to-day, with what it was fifty or even thirty years ago, we observe it to have been, in the mean time, very greatly extended. We do not find, however, that the additions which have been made to it are in all, or even in most cases, of that class of studies which may be properly called disciplinary. They consist, for the most part, of those branches of Physical Science, or of Natural History, which have received, in these later years, so large a degree of development. It may be added, moreover, that a much more considerable space is at present given to modern languages than was formerly allowed; and that Civil Engineering, a purely practical science, has come in for a material share of attention. Considered in a merely educational point of view, the additions must be pronounced to be



uncalled for and unnecessary. At the same time, while no one can deny the great value of the knowledge which they embrace, we can not regard the proposition, to discard them entirely, with unqualified favor. They happen, moreover, to be the subjects most favorite with those, among the people, who complain most loudly of the existing course of study; and were we to abolish them, we should excite a still more emphatic expression of disapprobation.

But it is to be observed that, while so large additions have been made to the amount of labor to be performed, there has been no corresponding increase of the time allotted to the work; and the question will unavoidably arise, Is it possible that all this time can have been usefully employed half a century ago, if at present we find it sufficient to enable us to accomplish so much more? And if it was so then, do we not deceive ourselves, when we imagine, that we do in fact accomplish what we propose to ourselves now; and have we not barely increased the surface over which we skim, without any longer penetrating to an equal depth? If this is true, and that it is so, we have the publicly expressed convictions of many of our most eminent educators, is it not a matter of self-evident and urgent necessity, that the existing state of things should be in some manner modified, without further delay?

It must be observed, that the modern additions, to the course of study, are mainly valuable, as they contribute to the amount of the student's knowledge, and not especially so, as a means of mental discipline. If the course is to be reduced, and if in this reduction these studies are to be retained to the present extent, or if, as is sometimes demanded, they are to be even more widely expanded, the consequence will be, that the properly educational feature of the system will disappear, and we shall convert our colleges into institutions for pure instruction. This will be to abrogate our system of higher education altogether. If, again, we effect the reduction by throwing out these subjects, to which popular opinion has attached so high and, it must be admitted, so just a value, then we must deny, to the generality of our youth, the only opportunity which seems at present to be open to them, to acquire a species of knowledge, which appears to have become indispensable to every well-informed man. The subject appears thus to be beset with difficulties upon every side.

Two expedients appear to present themselves, through which to obtain relief. In the first place, we may lengthen the period allotted to college education, extending the course of study over a larger number of years, definite or indefinite. Under this arrangement, the later years may be devoted more particularly to providing



the furniture of the mind, while the earlier may be mainly devoted to the development and discipline of its faculties. That we shall meet with objection, on the score of the increased expense which will thus attend the education of a youth, is a thing to be naturally expected; yet I do not see, that this objection is entitled to any very serious consideration, when weighed against the absolute impossibility of furnishing at all the education demanded, upon any more favorable conditions. Of the many subjects which we now undertake to teach, it is notorious that not a few are taught more in pretense than in fact. And I believe it to be true, beyond contradiction, that, in order to do even so much, we have greatly detracted from the thoroughness with which the absolutely indispensable disciplinary studies, the Latin and the Greek, Geometry and its applications, Rhetoric, Logic, and Metaphysics, were once taught, in the same institutions. If the impatient public were to demand, that we should reduce our course to three years, because it would be cheaper to the patrons of colleges, that would afford us no justification for attempting to comply with the demand. It is our business, not to try to control, but rather to conform ourselves to the laws which regulate the human mind; and we can no more crowd a definite amount of instruction into a space too small to hold it, than we can force a quart of matter into a pint cup.

But secondly, we may endeavor by degrees—for a change of this kind must be gradual—to increase the exactions required for admission into the lowest class, until, after a time, we shall have forced the preparatory schools to do the entire amount of work now accomplished in the first, or perhaps the first and second years. This suggestion may possibly find more immediate favor than the preceding, and, in point of fact, it has long been a fixed policy, in some of our colleges, to pursue a course tending in this very direction. The progress thus far made has, however, been slow—slower than the exigencies of the case require, and slower than even the most cautious prudence demands. A certain timidity has seemed to control the better judgments of those who feel most sensibly the necessity of some sort of relief from present embarrassments, growing possibly out of the apprehension—which is doubtless to some degree well founded—that, unless the movement should be simultaneous and general, it would result in loss of patronage to the institution which should take too decidedly the lead. This danger might be obviated by a common understanding, entered into by the managers of different institutions, determining definitely the steps by which the desired change should be effected. It is not to be denied, however, that the expedient I here propose would be much

more easily reducible to practice, in those parts of our country, in which there exist permanent preparatory schools, of a superior grade, than in those large portions of the West and South, where such schools are for the most part temporary, and are too often in the hands of instructors incompetent to the task which it is proposed to assign to them. In England, a great part of the purely disciplinary study is accomplished in such schools, as those of Eton, and Harrow, and Rugby; and were not this true, it is very questionable, how far the university system, as it has been in past years carried out at Oxford and Cambridge, could supply the defect. In Germany, the same work is done in the gymnasia, which rank, in most important particulars, as high as our colleges, and in some even higher. If we are ever in this country to have universities, approaching in plan, to those of the latter country—at least, if our colleges, or any of them, are ever to be elevated to any thing like such a rank—it can only be by ceasing, in great measure, to be what they are, schools for intellectual training; and this can only be possible when they shall, by pursuing some such course as I have suggested, have forced into existence a lower order of schools, capable of doing very much of their present work for them. Whether this will ever be, or whether it is desirable that, to the full extent of the transformation implied, it should be, are questions which I shall not undertake to answer. That a change can be carried beneficially to the extent I have proposed, I am, however, fully persuaded.

In connection with such a change, or even in fact without it, it seems to me important, that the rules which determine the age, at which youth are admissible to our colleges, should undergo revision. Most of our colleges receive candidates for admission at the early age of fourteen. In some few, the minimum age is as high as sixteen; and I am confident that it ought never to be lower. Much of the disheartening difficulty, which is incurred by the youthful student, in some parts of his collegiate course, is unquestionably to be ascribed to the immaturity of mind which he brings to its encounter. The remedy for this evil is so easy, and the evil itself has so often presented itself to many thoughtful minds, that I limit myself to this bare allusion to the subject.

Should neither of the plans which I have presented for relieving our colleges from their present embarrassing condition, in which they are consciously attempting a greater labor than they are capable of performing, meet with general favor, then I know of no alternative but that we should reject entirely from our regular course of study for graduation, many of those branches of Natural History, or of

physical science, pursued into its practical applications, of which we now confessedly furnish but very meager sketches, and which therefore, without being themselves mastered even in outline occupy much time which might be more usefully employed. I extend this remark to the modern languages, which are always easy of independent acquisition by a person who has use for them, of which the proper pronunciation, which is the only particular in which the assistance of a teacher is necessary, is literally *never* acquired in colleges, but which, in many institutions within the circle of my observation, have made very large and serious encroachments upon the time once devoted to the eminently disciplinary and inestimably valuable study of the Latin and the Greek. In looking over one or two college catalogues which happen to be at hand, I find the following among the studies obligatory upon all candidates for graduation: Geology, Mineralogy, Conchology, Zoölogy, Physiology, Botany, Meteorology, Chemical Analysis, Agricultural Chemistry, Civil Engineering, the French language, the Spanish language, the German language, and finally the Constitution of the United States, and the principles of International Law. All this I say is strictly obligatory, and not in any particular dependent on the option of the student. And all this is in addition to what was once called a full course of training in the liberal arts, and was believed to furnish occupation enough to fill up the entire space of four years. Upon this exhibit, I make no comment. To master any one of the branches of Natural History enumerated, would present sufficient employment to occupy almost a life-time. Chemical Analysis can only be practically understood by exclusive devotion to it for months or years. Civil Engineering is a science so eminently practical, and so extensively conversant with details, as to require for any valuable purpose, a devotion hardly less exclusive and hardly less long continued. Is it worth while to deceive the public, by pretending to teach all these things when the possibility of our doing so except in pretence, is a palpable absurdity?

But it may be said that the mere outlines we give have their value. If they do not conduct into the depths of a science, they furnish some general notions regarding it; they acquaint the student with names, and enable him to converse upon such matters in a general manner, so as not to appear utterly ignorant when they happen to be introduced as topics of discussion. This is a plausible apology for superficial knowledge, but I can call it nothing better. I can not believe that the advantage gained is worth the sacrifice which is



made to secure it. The fact is, that most branches of natural history are subjects on which individuals must inform themselves independently of masters; or if they resort to the assistance of proficient, they must do this in institutions specially devoted to the elucidation of such subjects. Associations of naturalists furnish the best schools which our country yet possesses for this purpose, and no individual, whatever may be the extent of his elementary acquirements in those departments of knowledge, will find them of any after value, if he neglects to resort to these means of advancing and perfecting them. If then, our colleges would disencumber themselves of any part of the intolerable burthen which they attempt at present to carry, and if they can not be induced either to throw a portion of it upon the schools below, or to extend the period of time over which it is spread, they have no remaining resource but to abandon the attempt to teach some of the many things in regard to which their present teaching is little better than a farce. Let practical sciences, like Civil Engineering and Chemical Analysis go over to special schools, of which already several have arisen, either associated with colleges or disjoined from them, highly honorable to the country, and, until higher Universities rise up among us, let the various branches of Natural History find their encouragement among associations of men whose taste lead them to their cultivation. If, however, either of the previously suggested expedients be deemed more eligible, let the concluding years in college be given in great measure to subjects of this nature; and in order that the results may not continue to be as unsatisfactory as they are at present, let the principle of option be freely introduced into this part of the course, so that the efforts of individuals may not be rendered unproductive, by being frittered away upon an endless variety of subjects.

I pass to inquire whether our college system does not admit of some improvement in regard to the *stimulants* held out to incite young men to intellectual effort. In professional schools, to which students voluntarily resort, at a time when they begin to feel themselves dependent on their own exertions, and when they are conscious that the knowledge they acquire is to determine the degree of their success in life, no special stimulants are necessary to secure the profitable employment of their time. In college, this motive is much less influential, and, as a general rule, it may be said hardly to exist at all. To an imperfectly disciplined mind, on the other hand, mental exertion is positively irksome, while in the morning of life, the allurements of pleasure and the temptations to indolence are almost



irresistible. Opposed to influences so prejudicial to the formation of studious habits, we have that love of pre-eminence which naturally inheres in the breast of all mankind, and which, of itself, without being fostered by any artificial stimulus, is sufficient to elicit in many, a very commendable spirit of exertion. The pride of successful scholarship is a feeling honorable to its subject; and I am far from being able to believe that it ought in any manner to be repressed. There are some, I know, who regard all pride as sinful, and who maintain that the actions of men, whether in youth or in age, ought to be influenced by no motive but that which is found in a sense of duty. Such views, however, are not those of the majority of men; and I shall presume, without entering into any argument on the subject, that they are not the views of the body I am addressing.

But if the simple desire to earn an honorable name for intellectual superiority in the little community of which he is a member, be often a sufficient motive to impel a student to exertion, this motive may be rendered much more efficacious, by the adoption of such means to mark this superiority, as shall stamp it with the character of an ascertained and recognized fact, and shall give it publicity not only in the college but in the surrounding world. In most of our colleges, therefore, varying grades of honor are assigned to the most distinguished members of each class, at the conclusion of the course, and sometimes on other occasions. It is generally an honor, to be permitted to take part in the public exercises of commencement day, or of the class exhibitions; and certain of the exercises then assigned to individuals are commonly understood to signify a distinction of the highest character.

This plan is attended with undeniable advantages; but it is to be observed of it, that all the distinctions it confers are merely relative in their significancy. They denote the superiority of one individual over others of the same class, but they afford no means of comparing one class with another. It seems to be desirable that some means should be devised for stamping absolute, as distinguished from relative merit. We ought to be able to say of a scholar, not merely, that he is better than another, which, if the entire truth were known, may after all be but insignificant praise; but that he is capable of passing with honor some definite and intelligible ordeal, such as may be provided by requiring of him the performance of tasks of ascertained difficulty.

Such tasks may be prepared in the several departments of instruction by the officers respectively in charge of them; and if no individual of a class shall be found equal to the highest or the second or

third in grade of difficulty, the corresponding honors may for that time be withholden. A plan like this will make the members of every class competitors, in a certain sense, with all who have gone before them; and its tendencies must obviously be to stimulate effort to a much higher degree than where the competition is only for the stamp of a certain nameless and indefinite merit, in no instance clearly ascertained.

It is worth considering, moreover, that this plan will remove, in great measure, the moral evils which are probably inseparable from a competition immediately personal; since, when the struggle is for absolute and not for relative superiority, the success of one aspirant to honor does not involve the necessary humiliation of another.

As permanent tokens of these distinctions, prizes in the form of valuable medals, books, instruments of science or other convenient objects, may very properly be conferred. The number of these, the frequency with which they should be distributed, and the various kinds of merit which they may most judiciously be employed to distinguish, may be subjects for more mature consideration.

As to the manner in which these distinctions should be awarded, it is obviously proper that the performances of all the parties convened, should be submitted to a committee of disinterested judges, who should have no duty but to compare them with the standard of absolute excellence set up, and to determine how far they fulfil the conditions required. Upon their report, the decision should be announced and the prizes presented in presence of the public, on Commencement day.

As to those relative distinctions which are now I believe, almost invariably made among the members of each class, since they are awarded in view of the whole series of performances which have been daily exhibited throughout the whole preceding course, it appears to me that they should be made to depend, not entirely upon the judgment of the faculty, nor entirely upon the exhibit of the contemporaneous record, but to a certain extent at least, upon the opinions of the students themselves as expressed by vote. The voting should be not explicitly to assign definite distinctions to definite individuals, but should be in the form of lists of merit, which should include the names of the entire class or section to which each voter belongs, or of so large a number of them as may be prescribed, his own course being excluded, arranged numerically in the order of merit. Double lists may perhaps with propriety be required, distinguishing independently the order in letters and in science; and every voter

should of course be put upon his honor to give his suffrage in accordance with his honest convictions.

I found this opinion upon several considerations which appear to me to be not without a sensible importance. In the first place, students observe their fellow-students from a point of view inaccessible to the Faculty. They are sometimes aware of the practice of arts which can not be known to the instructor, by which an individual may seem to be entitled to a credit which is not fairly his own. Translations and interlined books in the languages, borrowed solutions in the mathematics, and other similar aids, may be employed by some, while by others they are honestly rejected. To give to the popular voice a certain weight in the assignment of honors, is to put the most effectual check which occurs to me to practices like these.

In the second place, to make all young men more or less dependent for distinction, upon the estimation in which their attainments and abilities are held by their peers, is to impress them with a higher sense of the value of an honorable reputation, and a more honest desire to possess a real rather than a seeming merit. In this view of the case, I can not but believe that the moral influences of the plan I recommend must be good.

In the third place, I believe that it would be a gratification to the parties interested—and all are more or less interested, whether candidates for high distinction or not—to be recognized as judges in the assignment of the honors won in a competition of which, all have been equally witnesses; nor can I perceive that any disadvantage can attend the policy of permitting this gratification.

I would, of course, have the judgment of the instructors, as well as that of the students, consulted; but as to the relative weight which should be given to each, I am not fully prepared at this time, to express an opinion.

Besides the stimulants to exertion already mentioned, an additional one may be provided by the foundation of scholarships. Scholarships already exist in some of our colleges, but I do not know that they are generally conferred on individuals in reward for meritorious exertion. Indigence has perhaps been regarded as presenting a higher ground of claim for their advantages than merit; or possibly it may be said with greater correctness that while merit has been in some degree considered, indigence has nevertheless been made an indispensable condition of their bestowal. If scholarships, however, are to be employed for the purpose of stimulating the highest exercise of talent, they must be trammelled by no considerations like this. They must be understood to be rewards of merit exclusively,



and they must be conferred on the most meritorious without regard to their circumstances. It is unfortunate that, in the great multiplicity of colleges in America, the public munificence is so divided up and parceled out, as to render the expedient here suggested one which we can hardly hope soon to see generally employed. Scholarships are too expensive expedients to be available in institutions which are barely able to sustain themselves, and which do actually succeed in sustaining themselves only by making the salaries of their officers barely sufficient to sustain life. But if, in any of our institutions, it should be found practicable to hold out the encouragement to exertion, which the prospect of securing a scholarship may be presumed to afford, the following suggestions may have a value.

1. The design of these species of stimulus being to keep the spirit of effort alive, a scholarship should be liable to forfeit, whenever its incumbent falls into habits of idleness or vice.

2. As the object is to encourage industry *in college*, and not directly to reward successful exertion during the period of preparation, no scholarship should be conferred upon a student, until after the close of at least a year from the time of his admission. The benefit may then be made retro-active, and the value of the scholarship for the year that is past may be made over to the successful competitor at once.

3. This principle may be extended, should it be thought proper, from year to year; or the beneficiary may continue to hold his position, until, by his own neglect of study or vicious conduct, he may be adjudged to have forfeited it. Under these conditions, scholarships, whenever there exist the resources to create them, may probably be made an eminently efficacious means of encouraging to attainments of the highest order. Since they are conferred as honors, no fastidiousness will be likely to reject them merely from a fear of incurring the imputation of mercenary motives; while the pecuniary benefits which they carry with them will prove a real, though perhaps an unavowed, incentive to the desire of securing them.

It may be said, and there is force in the remark, that the kinds of stimulus of which we have been speaking are in their own nature, restricted to the few. Scholarships and prizes can not be numerous, and the merely nominal honors which most colleges confer, leave, after all, the great majority of every class undistinguished. To obviate in a measure this advantage, a plan of grading is in general use, founded on the recorded values of the several performances of all the students, estimated according to a definite scale. Upon this basis, a special merit roll is made out in each study or in each department,



and a general merit roll is constructed from a combination of all of these together. The results of these records are usually communicated periodically to the parents and friends of every student. By this means the honor which is due to respectability is presumed to be secured, no less certainly than that which the higher distinctions award to superiority; and no one is permitted to feel that his deficiencies will be covered up and concealed, in consequence of his being confounded with a multitude.

This plan, which in theory is unexceptionable, seems to be attended with some practical disadvantages. An experience of many years has failed to satisfy me that its tendencies are entirely good. It encourages to a pernicious extent a disposition to resort to those artifices by which young men often endeavor to impose on their instructors; and leads them to place a higher value upon show than upon substance. This is among the considerations which have induced me to believe that it is useful, from time to time, to take the sense of the students themselves in regard to each other's merit as scholars. Were this practice to be made a recognized part of the system, I am persuaded that results much more worthy of reliance than are now possible would be reached; while genuine scholarship would become an object of higher ambition, and unworthy arts would fall into deeper disrepute.

The system of grading might furthermore be made more efficacious as an incitement to application than at present, should classes be divided into sections upon the basis of comparative scholarship. This plan is, I believe, in practice at the Military Academy at West Point; but I am not aware that it has been introduced into any of our colleges. Let those of the highest order of merit be separated from the rest, or let there be several subdivisions established on the same principle, each reciting by itself. Degradation or promotion from section to section may then be made the penalty of relaxation of effort or the reward of increased diligence and success. To carry out in practice a plan of this kind may seem to require an increase of the number of instructors now found sufficient, or of the amount of labor which the same instructors are expected to perform; and to a certain extent, this may be true. But with the reduction of the numbers reciting at the same time, the duration of the recitation may also be, in a measure if not correspondingly, reduced; so that the burthen may not necessarily become intolerable.

I believe this suggestion to be well worth consideration. It is notorious that the largest amount of the teacher's time and attention is almost invariably occupied with those members of a class who are

most deficient in preparation of their daily exercises; and who either from inattention or incapacity, are slowest to learn. This portion operate as a dead weight in retarding the progress of the rest; and the example of their imperfect performances operates inevitably to degrade the standard of excellence in recitation. Let them be separated from their superiors, and, if they are capable of being stimulated at all, they will endeavor to escape from the implied degradation; if not, they will at least, no longer be an injury to any but themselves.

The object of University Examinations in foreign countries is to determine the fitness of their subjects for the honor of graduation. With us, for the most part, this fitness is presumed to be ascertained mainly by the record which is kept of the performances of our students during the entire period of collegiate instruction; and if examinations are regarded as criteria of attainment at all, it is only to a moderate degree. In point of fact, as they are usually conducted, they are not worthy of any great reliance, considered as tests of scholarship or attainment. They are generally brief in duration, confined rigidly to the matter of text-books, almost always oral, and conducted in each department by the instructor himself. A few minutes allotted to each student is all that the arrangements permit. A few questions, difficult or simple, as accident may determine, a single passage in a Latin or Greek author, a single proposition in the mathematics, or the enunciation of a principle in physical science, furnish the entire test by which the attainments of several years are to be judged. It is no uncommon thing for a young man conscious of great deficiencies, to congratulate himself upon his happy escape; or for one who entertains a pretty well-founded confidence of success, to be subjected to severe mortification. Our colleges are therefore right in regarding their examinations, as they are at present conducted, as being of comparatively little value in determining relative grades of scholarship, or in ascertaining the fitness of their students for graduation.

I have no hesitation in expressing the belief that, unless these exercises can be so modified in their plan and their thoroughness, as to become in fact what they profess to be in name, it would be better that they should be abolished entirely. They ought to be the means of ascertaining how faithfully the student has employed his time and what is the extent of his knowledge of the subject with which he has been occupied. To this end, they should in the main be conducted in writing, and the same tests should be applied in every individual case. These tests should be carefully prepared before-hand, in such a manner that they may show at once the range and the depth of the student's knowledge. Time enough should be allowed to

render the trial a thorough one. The tasks allotted to each examination-session should only be made known after the session has commenced; and no one should be permitted to depart until he has completed his performance. Such performances may be fairly relied on as presenting an exhibit of scholarship both positive and comparative; and in this respect they are infinitely preferable to any record of daily recitation which can be kept during the period of instruction.

A great vice of this latter criterion is, that it encourages a habit of studying merely for the moment; of depending too much upon the mere exercise of memory, and of concentrating the attention too exclusively upon the task of the day, without sufficient regard to its connections with those of yesterday and of to-morrow. The instructor, who, without giving previous notice of his intention, calls for some fact or principle which was fresh a week before, finds himself too often able to elicit only the most unsatisfactory and meager replies. If young men are made to feel that their merits will be estimated by the actual *results* they have to show for the time and labor they have expended during their college course, and not by that semblance of knowing which is carried without much difficulty directly from the text-book to the recitation, it may be hoped that substantial attainments will come to be more highly esteemed, and will be more generally met with.

Some of our colleges already employ the plan of examination which I have recommended. Whether any of them make it, however, the sole basis of *classification* in regard to scholarship, I am not informed. That it ought to be made so, I am, for my own part, fully persuaded. I can see no injustice which it is likely to operate, since it places all upon a footing of more perfect equality in regard to opportunities than any other plan which can be devised. And its adoption will at once set at rest many troublesome questions which are apt to arise, in the adjustment of the scale of merit upon the plan now generally in use.

The subject of academic degrees requires but a brief notice. I suppose, that if our colleges continue to adhere to a prescribed course of instruction, some form must be kept up to distinguish the student who has fulfilled all the requirements of this course, from one who has not. The degree of Bachelor of Arts serves at present to make this distinction. I do not know that it has any other use; but should it be abolished, as some have desired, I see no escape from the necessity of adopting some substitute to answer precisely the same purpose. If any object to the *name*, on the score that the word "Arts," in the



sense in which it is here employed, is obsolete; it may be very well replied, that the name is ancient, and venerable, and universally intelligible; and that, if it carries with it, as it does, a sort of academic odor, it is in fact all the better on that account. But since, in regard to the necessity of preserving the *thing*, there can hardly be two opinions, it seems to be a very idle and useless waste of time to dispute about the name by which it shall be called.

Some writers who have advocated the voluntary, or as it has been otherwise called, the "open University" plan, have sneered at this feature of our system, as if the degree were the reward of *residence* in college, and not of any necessary amount of attainment in arts. Any one, they say, can attain the distinction of graduation, who chooses to remain four years in college; whereas in the model institution, in which their views are illustrated, no one can be a graduate, however long the period of his residence, until he shall have been pronounced proficient in a sufficient number of departments. These statements are in a certain sense correct; and in a certain more material sense, otherwise. A student, after a four years' residence in college, usually succeeds in securing the Bachelor's degree; but it is to be observed that he must first *reside the four years*—a matter not entirely optional with him, since he is always liable to be turned back or dismissed for deficient scholarship. In the "open" Universities, on the other hand, though degrees are not granted except on evidence of proficiency, I know nothing to limit the duration of residence, so that apparently they are deficient in one important species of stimulus to industry.

The degree of Bachelor of Arts, or something equivalent to it, to be conferred on those who appear to be worthy of it, at the end of the stated course of study, seems to me, therefore, to be indispensable. But though I see no reason to recommend any change in regard to the usages relating to *this* degree, the case is very different in reference to the higher degree of Master. In the English Universities, when the period of education extended to seven years, and when teaching in order to learn was one of the agencies employed in those institutions, this degree was conferred only after the Bachelor had devoted himself for three years to higher attainments, and to the business of actually instructing others. Among the many abuses which have crept into those venerable institutions, these regulations have disappeared. Neither teaching nor study is necessary to enable the Bachelor to proceed Master, yet the three years' interval between the granting of the two degrees is still maintained. Our colleges have borrowed this later English usage; and in most of them



now, the degree of Master is conferred "in course" upon all Bachelors of three years' standing. The consequence is, that the degree of Master of Arts is significant of nothing at all, except of the fact that the recipient has been graduated before. It is therefore of no use as a stimulant to exertion, to students either in college or out; and it might without any disadvantage be abolished entirely.

Our practice in conferring this distinction indiscriminately upon all the alumni of our colleges, operates to render it nearly valueless when it is bestowed, as it occasionally is, for meritorious attainments, upon those who are not already graduates. An honor is not an honor when it is shared with all the world; and more especially when it is attained by most of those who wear it, without any merit of their own. It seems to me that the practice of our colleges on this subject should be discontinued; and that hereafter, if there is to be such a thing as proceeding to the Master's degree "in course," this course should mean something more than *the course of time*. Perhaps a careful examination of this subject may lead to some eligible plan for reducing within tolerable limits the extended curriculum of study upon which I have already sufficiently commented. Perhaps the idea of lengthening the period of study may be rendered more acceptable, by suggesting that the Bachelor's degree may be conferred at the end of four years, upon such as have passed through a course of a character mainly disciplinary; and the Master's degree reserved for those who choose to remain an additional period in the pursuit of those branches for which we have, at present so little time to share. Upon these points I content myself with these brief suggestions.

Though the government of our colleges is, in theory, parental, in practice it partakes very little of this character. The arrangements presume that the students are subject to the constant supervision of the authorities, but in point of fact this supervision is so nearly nominal, as, if considered in the light of a restraint, to be without any material value. Though students, are by law at all times liable to visitation in their apartments, they are rarely visited oftener than once a day, and in many colleges not so often. The influences by which a disposition to disorder are principally restrained, are simply such as operate on men in ordinary society—the advantages which spring from a fair reputation, and the disadvantages to which irregularities of conduct inevitably lead.

The difficulties of College Government, grow mainly out of the questions, how shall offences be prevented, and how, when they occur, shall offenders be treated. In regard to the first point, I am persuaded that little is gained by holding out the idea that the Fac-

ulty expect to accomplish much by the mere exercise of vigilance. This is directly to invite a trial of wits between the two parties, in which the advantages are all on one side; and it is to give birth to a feeling that good order is not a matter in which the governors and governed have an equal interest. My experience satisfies me that, more may be accomplished by appealing to the sense of propriety of which no young man is wholly devoid, and by professing to *expect* that a community of young gentlemen will behave as gentlemen should, than by permitting them to suppose that any reliance is placed upon any degree of watchfulness which the Faculty have it in their power to exercise over them.

In regard to the treatment of offences, I am less and less inclined to believe in the efficacy of any graduated system of penalties. Private admonition and remonstrance I regard as preferable, in all cases where offences are venial, to public censures; and if these means fail to reform, they should be followed by removal from college without the superadded mortification of notoriety. More serious cases, which are rarer, may require severer treatment. In regard to such no remark is necessary here.

In many institutions the practice exists of keeping a record of demerit. All minor offences are rated according to a certain numerical scale, and the student whose account reaches a certain maximum, within a time specified, is cut off from his connection with the institution. In a college of which I have been an officer, I have seen this plan in operation for many years; and I have afterward seen it discontinued for several more, without any sensible disadvantage. In fact if any noticeable consequence could be considered as attributable to the change, it was rather an improvement than a deterioration of the general good order of the community.

No one can be more decidedly opposed than I am, to excess of penal legislation. Its effect is often as much to create as to prevent evil, and I have never yet seen a college in which the fault appeared to be that there was too little.

In regard to the discovery of the perpetrators of secret offences, the laws of different colleges differ among themselves. Some institutions claim the right to compel every student to exculpate himself; for which purpose his own declaration is, in the absence of any circumstances calculated to invalidate it, accepted as sufficient proof of innocence. Others require the testimony of the witnesses to the facts, thus occasionally compelling one student to inculpate another. Both these methods of investigation have been the occasion of serious difficulties; and it is probable that neither is expedient so long as there

is any possibility of securing the ends of good government without them. The first appears to me, after having been a witness of its practical working, in several instances, to be so objectionable, that I can not believe it ought any longer to be suffered to stand, as a rule of proceeding in any college. The other, which is the only alternative, can hardly be relinquished, unless it is intended to disarm the government entirely; but the cases which will justify an appeal to the powers it confers, will very rarely occur in an institution which is generally well managed.

It is my opinion that the colleges of the present day are distinguished by a much greater uniformity of good order, and so far as appearances go, of propriety of conduct on the part of students, than was the case twenty or thirty years ago. Those premeditated disturbances and freaks, originating in the pure spirit of mischief, denominated "college tricks," have, within the limits of my observation, been growing less and less frequent; and the occasions have become sensibly rarer throughout the country, on which there has been any thing like an organized resistance to college authorities. Whether this be a result of a growing disposition on the part of college officers to rely more upon personal influence, and less upon law than formerly, or whether it be owing to the increased disfavor with which such things are looked upon by the public, the result may in either case be accepted as an evidence of improvement, which can not fail to be gratifying to the friends of education every where.

In connection with the subject of government, it is in order to allude to a radical evil of our system, out of which a multitude of consequent evils grow. I can conceive nothing more injudicious in principle than the collecting together, in an isolated community apart from the observation of the public, and but nominally subject to the supervision of those who are presumed to watch over them of a large body of young men fresh from the restraints of the family and the school, and surrounded by a multitude of novel temptations. The dormitory system, as it is called, I esteem, for such a class of persons, to be purely and unqualifiedly bad. It is pernicious equally to the morals and the manners. It fosters vicious habits, blunts the sense of delicacy, encourages rudeness and vulgarity of speech, leads to disregard of personal neatness, and is finally the obvious and immediate cause of nearly every one of those offences which the penal laws of colleges are enacted to punish.

I am aware that many of our existing colleges are so situated as to render the abandonment of the system, at least for the present, and for then, an impossibility. The dormitories are built, and no



choice remains but to continue to occupy them; since they are unfortunately built in situations where no other accommodations can be obtained. Their locations have been selected in consequence of what seems to me to be a very idle fear of the injurious influences which are supposed to hang around large towns. In some cases, where a choice has been made more wisely, either no dormitories have been erected at all, or none have been recently erected to accommodate growing numbers. This is a subject, the discussion of which is out of place here, and my views in regard to it have been elsewhere so fully expressed, that I content myself with this brief allusion to it.

It is a part of the duty expected of me that I should consider the question whether it is possible to do any thing to improve the relation in which our colleges stand to each other. Upon this point I shall be very brief. In the first place, it may be observed that if the system itself is to undergo any important change, the benefits which such a change may bring with it, can only be secured by the general acquiescence of all the institutions concerned. The perfect independence which our colleges enjoy, not only of each other, but of any superior controlling power, renders it impracticable to unite them in any common and simultaneous movement, except by first convincing them of its necessity. If it is not a mistake to presume that such a necessity does really exist, then we can not doubt that a conviction of its reality must every where follow a fair examination of the subject. The question then next arises, how can we secure such an examination—how can we awaken the spirit of inquiry among all those who, whether as officers of Faculties or members of superintending Boards, hold in their hands the management of our more than one hundred and fifty scattered collegiate institutions? Correspondence originating with those who are already alive to the importance of this subject might accomplish much; but who shall take the lead in such a correspondence, or bear the heavy burthen which it imposes? And how, supposing that any zealous individual were to put himself forward in this work, how could such an one hope to secure for his suggestions any higher consideration than is usually bestowed on the opinions of an individual?

Two ideas occur to me as containing within them a possible solution of the difficulty. The first I scarcely venture to present, even with the utmost diffidence. It is, that a convention of delegates from all the principal colleges of the country should be assembled to deliberate upon the measures which the common good requires. It would be too much to anticipate that any very large progress could



be made during the setting of a single such convention. If the plan is worth adopting at all, it ought to involve the idea of a sort of permanent council periodically assembling perhaps as often as once in every one or two years.

I should consider a suggestion of this kind as being entirely visionary, if I were not in some degree encouraged by the fact that, in this Association, we have already an organization which must annually bring together a great and increasing number of the friends of education; among whom we may with just reason expect to find many who are interested in the management of our colleges. If therefore, it should seem to be worth an effort to attempt to secure such a convention as I have suggested, the time and the place which would appear to offer the highest probability of success, would be those fixed upon for the meetings of this Association. I am aware of the serious difficulties which must attend the working of a plan like this. The vast extent of our country, the consequent great distances which many delegates would be obliged to travel, and the expense to which they would be subjected, added to the deficient interest which will probably be felt, in the beginning at least, and in many quarters, in the object proposed, would too probably render the attendance far from general.

I would suggest, therefore, as an alternative proposition, that the standing committee of this Association, or a special committee appointed expressly for the purpose, should be instructed to open a correspondence, by circular, with every college in the country, setting forth briefly the nature of the evils presumed at present to exist in the system, or communicating documents for that purpose; and soliciting from each a distinct expression of views thereupon. Upon the basis of the results thus obtained, the convention could proceed hereafter explicitly to recommend the immediate introduction of such modifications of the system, as should appear to be sanctioned by the majority of voices; and the knowledge that they are so sanctioned would furnish a pretty good guaranty for their general adoption. I limit myself to merely throwing out this idea. I am unwilling to trespass further upon the patience of the Association by enlarging upon it.

Apart, however from the object of endeavoring to unite all the colleges of our country in some plan of definite, simultaneous and concerted action, it seems to be eminently desirable that the officers who control them should cultivate a more extensive and intimate personal acquaintance with each other. I trust that this Association may be found to be one of the most important instrumentalities in

bringing about so desirable a result. We meet here upon a common ground, and if we do not come as delegates expressly authorized to commit the institutions we represent to the adoption of specific measure of reform, we nevertheless gather each other's views, ascertain the sense of the majority on all important questions, and go home with re-awakened zeal to pursue our labors in the common cause; and possibly with more enlightened views and better established convictions, as to the direction in which we should put forth our efforts.

Nor should it satisfy us that we meet occasionally here upon a common ground. We should *visit each other* at home, acquaint ourselves with each other's usages, observe each other's arrangements and facilities for giving instruction, attend if possible each other's daily exercises of lecture and recitation, be present as frequently, as our opportunities admit, on the occasions of each other's public exhibitions. By this means, we shall learn to take an interest in other institutions, not unlike and hardly inferior to that which we feel for our own.

It is also highly desirable that an active *correspondence* should be kept up between the officers of different colleges. Nothing can be more effectual in keeping alive an interest in each others prosperity. The interchange, moreover of printed documents and papers, is not only gratifying as an attention, and encouraging as an evidence of sympathy, but it is substantially useful. Catalogues, addresses, printed outlines of lectures, and examination papers, may all furnish information of more or less value, and may sometimes contain suggestions which may be immediately turned to profit.

Finally, the officers of our colleges should cultivate a fraternal feeling. They are laborers in a common cause, and they are bound together by a common interest of the noblest kind. No spirit of rivalry should animate them, save the honorable desire of pre-eminence in doing good. Among the incessant bickerings and animosities of which the world is full, let the friends of education make it manifest, that they are superior to all petty jealousies; and while other questions are perpetually distracting our country, and arraying section against section, on this one at least let it appear that "we know no north and no south," but that all are willing to go hand in hand in the effort to elevate the intellectual character of our whole people.



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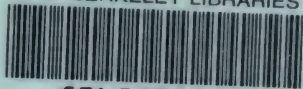
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